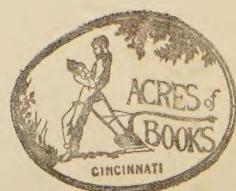


**BEWARE
AFTER
DARK!**



BEWARE AFTER DARK!

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THE WORLD'S MOST STUPENDOUS
TALES OF MYSTERY, HORROR,
THRILLS AND TERROR

SELECTED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

T. EVERETT HARRÉ

*Author of "Behold the Woman," "One Hour
—and Forever," etc.*



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Negotium Perambulans <i>E. F. Benson</i>	13
Back There in the Grass <i>Gouverneur Morris</i>	32
The Mollmeit of the Mountain <i>Cynthia Stockley</i>	50
Fishhead <i>Irvin S. Cobb</i>	75
The Fountain of Gold <i>Lafcadio Hearn</i>	87
The Shadowy Third <i>Ellen Glasgow</i>	94
Lukundoo <i>Edward Lucas White</i>	125
Rappaccini's Daughter <i>Nathaniel Hawthorne</i>	143
Lazarus <i>Leonid Andreyeff</i>	180
The Lame Priest <i>S. Carleton</i>	204
The Call of Cthulhu <i>H. P. Lovecraft</i>	223
Novel of the White Powder <i>Arthur Macken</i>	260
The Devils of Po Sung <i>Bassett Morgan</i>	281
The Isle of Voices <i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	307
The Sunken Land <i>George W. Bayly</i>	332
Two Spinsters <i>E. Phillips Oppenheim</i>	351
The Monster-God of Mamurth <i>Edmond Hamilton</i>	365
Huguenin's Wife <i>M. P. Shiel</i>	385
The Coconut Pearl <i>Beatrice Grimshaw</i>	399
The Quest of the Tropic Bird <i>John Fleming Wilson</i>	426
The Striding Place <i>Gertrude Atherton</i>	454



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INTRODUCTION

BY T. EVERETT HARRÉ

It is a rare adventure to come for the first time upon those too-rare and memorable stories that blaze a way into new worlds of the imagination and of fabulous fortune, those "realms of darkness and of gold" that—with what wonder and thrill as of a new discovery!—stir transports of terror, of dread and delight, in the deeps of the heart.

Sometimes I used to question if I could ever duplicate that "wild surmise"—as of "some watcher of the skies when a new planet sweeps into his ken"—experienced when I first read certain of the tales of Poe, Gautier, Hawthorne, Stevenson, Lafcadio Hearn, Anatole France, Rider Haggard and the earlier H. G. Wells. I can quite understand how many readers, grown disillusioned and blasé with the tame tales of our conventional magazines, come to feel that, because the fresh novelty is so unique, first thrills are best.

Have you ever looked back with wistful regret to your childhood, when impressions were so keen, and you thrilled with rapture or affright at your first apprehensions of demons and dragons, fairies, ogres, hobgoblins and ghosts? And when you were safely tucked within your covers, when a delightful goosefleshy creeping, rattling shutters conjured witches on broomsticks, and a creaking of floors made the dark alive with phantoms and perils. And when your little world—teeming with miracles and marvels and monsters, with adventures around any corner and back of every bush—was truly an enchanted place!

Alas, that the witchery should vanish so soon and the glow-of-gold on life's window-panes fade to an outlook of such drab, unromantic reality! Most of us lead humdrum lives. In our day-by-day routine, the glamour of the mysterious and marvellous—which alone gives luster to life—is dulled by a constant brushing of shoulders with the practical and commonplace.

How often we yearn for some utter and contrasting change, desperately for some release! What wouldn't we give at times for some magic carpet that would lift us up and out and away from the rut of the beaten track! Our chaffing against circumstance, our hankering to escape our familiar environment and associations for exotic regions of romance and mystery, to experience prodigious perils and behold phenomenal marvels, is humanly natural. It's the lack of stimulating change that makes one restless and out-of-sorts, that incites irascibility and indigestion, provokes domestic disharmony and disturbances and sometimes causes man, woman or child to bolt from the security of home or job for alluring if precarious and uncertain adventure.

But if we do manage to break away, don't we usually find the reality of distant places lacking in all the mirage-illusion that fancy painted, that people are everywhere mostly all alike, and that wherever we go, disenchanted and disappointed, we are again afflicted with the same discontent? After all, isn't it true that the only vital experiences are those of the human heart and the great adventures of the spirit!

Comparatively few of us can afford to be explorers and world-wanderers. We are told the supposed thrilling life of an aviator is tediously mechanical, physically tiring and lacking in all excitement, as he flies over continents and

oceans. So we try to find a way out of the deadly ordinariness of life in books. We seek excitement vicariously in "thrillers."

Crime—actual or fictional—has always exerted a widespread fascination. Mystery intrigues us. So for the past few years there has been a "craze" for crime-mystery-detection fiction. The wave of this type of entertainment has reached an amazing crest of popularity. Countless thousands have forgotten their business, domestic or what-not harassments in fictioned or allegedly true stories of criminal horror. Murder-mysteries have sold in the millions. This phenomenon, I believe, is due to the fact that the public, avid for thrills, has found in this sort of thing the most diverting release from humdrumness it could get.

Now that President Hoover in his campaign against lawlessness has taken an outspoken and positive stand against both news and fictional exploitation of crimes and criminals—against the "glamour of romance and heroism which our imaginative American minds too frequently throw around those who break the law"—I understand a number of prominent editors have volunteered their support of his policy and have put a ban on romanticised crime in their magazines. This may be like prohibition to the thirsty for those who gloat in gore, who love to go to sleep over stealings and shootings, and who vary cross-word puzzles with trying to solve the latest Broadway butterfly murder mystery.

But there are other, and greater, thrills aplenty.

Far more fascinating and gripping than sordid tales of crime, at least to me, is that too little known literature of imaginative mystery—tales of the fantastic, fanciful and fabulous, of the marvellous and monstrous, of the pregnant realm of the unseen and unknown which, by the secret pass-

word and magic of some master, may be revealed in all its wonders just outside our door.

Haven't you ever felt the lure of these regions of the weird?—of that world whose mysteries the eye of man has never fully seen, whose secrets the ear of man has never fully heard? When you consider the myths of primitive savages, the superstitions of earlier peoples, the grim ghost and vampire legends of the middle ages, the fairy and folklore of the Irish, the thousand nights' adventures of the Orientals, the witch tales of early New England and the more modern literature—serious and fictional—of the supernatural, it would seem it irresistibly and powerfully appeals to something fundamental in us. Isn't it because—whether we be hard-boiledly sophisticated or believers in “hexes” and spiritism—we all do want so tremendously to get out of ourselves, of our colorless surroundings, of the tedium that hems us in; because it is an inherent human instinct to try to break through the barriers of our surface senses and inhibitions, to surpass everyday emotions and sensations and through the imagination to transcend reality? It is an inherited and profoundly rooted yearning to peer beyond the veil of the hidden, to scale the most breathless cloudlands of fancy and to plumb the uttermost and most awesome abysses. Isn't pleasure sharpest when whetted by peril, and delight made most keen by dread?

We are living in what has been called a materialistic age. We work harder and make more money than ever, but romance and mystery are lacking in our lives, and science has routed those hosts of the supernatural which made the most ordinary life exciting—a constant adventure of positive dread and delight—in the happy dark ages. Because we live in an era of machines perhaps our craving—

and need—for the leavening touch of the fanciful is all the greater.

Well, there is still an "open sesame" to chambers as fearful and fascinating as those of Bluebeard, Ali-Baba and Aladdin; passage may still be taken on glamorous galleons for adventures and enterprise as terrific and astonishing as those of Sinbad and Marco Polo! That is, if you are not chicken-hearted in the dark, afraid of monsters or mice, and if you are doughty to face the dangers and pitfalls that guard the forbidden valley of vision where exist immortally all the fair and stately palaces, transcendent treasures, riotous riches, haunts of horrors, singing sirens, lovely enchantresses, wicked witches, demons, monsters and glowering ghosts ever conjured by the dreamers and miracle-workers of the world. These you may revel among if, in lieu of ginger ale and near-beer, you prefer the potent wine of wizardry.

If you are fed up on crime and detective yarns, with the highbrow realism about the tedious doings of tiresome people, if the creaking props of the wild west fail to whoopee an evening, here are tales to enthrall and terrify, to make your blood run cold and your hair stand on end, that will give you super-shudders and stupendous thrills.

This is not a collection of ghost stories (of which there are many). In what this book combines I believe it is unprecedented and outstandingly original. The stories I have selected are among the most bespelling and harrowing of their kind that I have ever read. Some are masterpieces of literature. Others, if not literature, are masterpieces of the glamorous or gruesome. I have sought to assemble as contrasting a variety as possible of tales, so as to appeal to different tastes and meet changing moods, and to offset

the supremely shuddery with others of a more sedative charm.

What may be "meat" for one may be a nightmare for another, and for the nightmares there are magic potions for the conjuring of pleasant dreams. If E. F. Benson's "Negotium Perambulans"—one of the creepiest stories by a modern author—or Irvin S. Cobb's "Fishhead"—a tour-de-force of gruesomeness—gives you creeps in your sheets you may quiet the shakes by the anodyne of Lafcadio Hearn's "The Fountain of Gold," that dazzling dream of rapturous romance, or Stevenson's "Isle of Voices," that delightful fantasy of a magic isle, or Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter," that entrancing and so sadly lovely tragedy of the beauteous maiden whose blood was poison and whose sweet kiss death. Leonid Andreyeff's "Lazarus" is to me something alone in literature, in its subtle suggestion of the unspeakable, incommunicable awfulness of what Lazarus remembered when he came back from the dead.

If you wish to recapture the grisly glee with which as a child you read of the ghoulish ogresses who lured little children to castles of candy and gingerbread only to roast and devour them, you will find Cynthia Stockley's story of a cannibalistic old lady in South Africa more fearsome than any fee-fi-faw-fum child's tale by reason of its ghastly realism. Perhaps you imagine you could never duplicate the trepidant zest with which you once followed the travels of Gulliver?—then read Gouverneur Morris' "Back There in the Grass," which gave me a wilder kick than I ever got as a kid out of the adventures in Lilliput. If you doubt anything could repeat the shivers you got out of H. G. Wells' long-ago story, "The Isle of Dr. Moreau," try Bassett Morgan's "Devils of Po Sung," by which one may hope from this young writer feats of the wildly fantastic such

as first distinguished Mr. Wells. H. P. Lovecraft, one of our newer authors, is doing some of the best things in eerie fiction to-day and deserves a place in our leading magazines. His "Call of Cthulhu," in its cumulative awesomeness and building of effect to its appalling finale, is reminiscent of Poe. Edmond Hamilton is a coming romanticist of daring and inventive originality; his "Monster-God of Mamurth" recites an adventure, arresting and terrifying, with a creature which makes seem tame and juvenile the dragons of fairy-tales.

To say that M. P. Shiel's stories reveal an imagination unsurpassed by any living writer is to repeat what has more or less been expressed by H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, Hugh Walpole and other famous contemporaries of this master of the macabre. This man is a literary sorcerer! The inventions of some of our most popular classic wizards, such as Bulwer-Lytton and Jules Verne, are no more gorgeous and grotesque, fantastic and fascinating, than the wonder-worlds of adventure, the prodigies and phenomena, conjured-up by the wand of his magic pen. And he is a fine artist. Mr. Shiel's books, for the most part written about twenty years ago, were recently republished in London, where they created a sensation, and are now being issued in New York. They offer gorgeous and delirious hours of thralls and thrills, to all who revel in fantasies of science and romances of the supernatural. I wish for Mr. Shiel among our reading millions the enthusiastic appreciation which he has already achieved among his distinguished British confrères. "Huguenin's Wife" is a sinisterly bespelling story, brilliant as some bale-fiery magnificent malign gem. In the serious literature of the supernatural Miss Ellen Glasgow has achieved an outstanding masterpiece in "The Shadowy Third," a modern story of spirit-return that is of poignant and power-

ful pathos and impressive in its suggestion of invisible judgment as classic Greek tragedy—a singularly fine story, indeed.

Arthur Machen's "Novel of the White Powder" leaves me aghast. I include it because I know of nothing like it in its compulsion of a fascinated curiosity despite the abhorrence of its abomination. It may be too strong wine for some—a veritable fume of a black wine of witches. So for those who may turn away, faint-hearted, there is brighter adventure in those romances of strange seas—"The Coconut Pearl," by Beatrice Grimshaw (one of the most alluring South Sea stories written by a living author), and John Fleming Wilson's "The Quest of the Tropic Bird," a beauteous thing in its fulfillment of an idyllic passion after heart-breaking seeking. For a final big moment at the end of the collection—because it leaves one so breathlessly gasping!—I have selected Gertrude Atherton's "The Striding Place," which attains a high art in the simplicity and effect, the unexpectedness and utter horror of its climax, sudden and startling as a thunderclap.

It is to the credit of the authors represented that here is what I feel to be a truly unusual book, unparalleled so far, I think, of its distinctive and unique kind.

It is my hope this volume will make available to readers, surfeited with one-tenth-of-one-per-cent fiction and craving stronger stimulation, the exhilarating escape from the commonplace, the delight of splendidous and shuddersome adventure, the utterly horrific thrills, which the reading certainly afforded me.

NEGOTIUM PERAMBULANS

(*"The Pestilence That Walketh in Darkness"*)

BY E. F. BENSON

THE casual tourist in West Cornwall may just possibly have noticed, as he bowled along over the bare high plateau between Penzance and the Land's End, a dilapidated signpost pointing down a steep lane and bearing on its battered finger the faded inscription "Polearn 2 miles," but probably very few have had the curiosity to traverse those two miles in order to see a place to which their guide-books award so cursory a notice. It is described there, in a couple of unattractive lines, as a small fishing village with a church of no particular interest except for certain carved and painted wooden panels (originally belonging to an earlier edifice) which form an altar-rail. But the church at St. Creed (the tourist is reminded) has a similar decoration far superior in point of preservation and interest, and thus even the ecclesiastically disposed are not lured to Polearn. So meager a bait is scarce worth swallowing, and a glance at the very steep lane which in dry weather presents a carpet of sharp-pointed stones, and after rain a ruddy watercourse, will almost certainly decide him not to expose his motor or his bicycle to risks like these in so sparsely populated a district. Hardly a house has met his eye since he left Penzance, and the possible trundling of a punctured bicycle for half

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a dozen weary miles seems a high price to pay for the sight of a few painted panels.

Polearn, therefore, even in the high noon of the tourist season, is little liable to invasion, and for the rest of the year I do not suppose that a couple of folk a day traverse those two miles (long ones at that) of steep and stony gradient. I am not forgetting the postman in this exiguous estimate, for the days are few when, leaving his pony and cart at the top of the hill, he goes as far as the village, since but a few hundred yards down the lane there stands a large white box, like a sea-trunk, by the side of the road, with a slit for letters and a locked door. Should he have in his wallet a registered letter or be the bearer of a parcel too large for insertion in the square lips of the sea-trunk, he must needs trudge down the hill and deliver the troublesome missive, leaving it in person on the owner, and receiving some small reward of coin or refreshment for his kindness. But such occasions are rare, and his general routine is to take out of the box such letters as may have been deposited there, and insert in their place such letters as he has brought. These will be called for, perhaps that day or perhaps the next, by an emissary from the Polearn post-office. As for the fishermen of the place, who, in their export trade, constitute the chief link of movement between Polearn and the outside world, they would not dream of taking their catch up the steep lane and so, with six miles farther of travel, to the market at Penzance. The sea route is shorter and easier, and they deliver their wares to the pier-head. Thus, though the sole industry of Polearn is sea-fishing, you will get no fish there unless you have bespoke your requirements to one of the fishermen. Back come the trawlers as empty as a haunted house, while their spoils are in the fish-train that is speeding to London.

Such isolation of a little community, continued, as it has been, for centuries, produces isolation in the individual as well, and nowhere will you find greater independence of character than among the people of Polearn. But they are linked together, so it has always seemed to me, by some mysterious comprehension: it is as if they had all been initiated into some ancient rite, inspired and framed by forces visible and invisible. The winter storms that batter the coast, the vernal spell of the spring, the hot, still summers, the season of rains and autumnal decay, have made a spell which, line by line, has been communicated to them, concerning the powers, evil and good, that rule the world and manifest themselves in ways benignant or terrible. . . .

I came to Polearn first at the age of ten, a small boy, weak and sickly, and threatened with pulmonary trouble. My father's business kept him in London, while for me abundance of fresh air and a mild climate were considered essential conditions if I was to grow to manhood. His sister had married the vicar of Polearn, Richard Bolitho, himself native to the place, and so it came about that I spent three years, as a paying guest, with my relations. Richard Bolitho owned a fine house in the place, which he inhabited in preference to the vicarage, which he let to a young artist, John Evans, on whom the spell of Polearn had fallen, for from year's beginning to year's end he never left it. There was a solid roofed shelter, open on one side to the air, built for me in the garden, and here I lived and slept, passing scarcely one hour out of the twenty-four behind walls and windows. I was out on the bay with the fisher-folk, or wandering along the gorse-clad cliffs that climbed steeply to right and left of the deep combe where the village lay, or pottering about on the pier-head, or bird's-nesting in the bushes with the boys of the village. Except on Sunday and

for the few hours of my lessons, I might do what I pleased so long as I remained in the open air. About the lessons there was nothing formidable; my uncle conducted me through flowering by-paths among the thickets of arithmetic, and made pleasant excursions into the elements of Latin grammar, and above all he made me daily give him an account, in clear and grammatical sentences, of what had been occupying my mind or my movements. Should I select to tell him about a walk along the cliffs, my speech must be orderly, not vague, slipshod notes of what I had observed. In this way, too, he trained my observation, for he would bid me tell him what flowers were in bloom, and what birds hovered fishing over the sea or were building in the bushes. For that I owe him a perennial gratitude, for to observe and to express my thoughts in the clear spoken word became my life's profession.

But far more formidable than my week-day tasks was the prescribed routine for Sunday. Some dark embers compounded of Calvinism and mysticism smoldered in my uncle's soul and made it a day of terror. His sermon in the morning scorched us with a foretaste of the eternal fires reserved for unrepentant sinners, and he was hardly less terrifying at the children's service in the afternoon. Well do I remember his exposition of the doctrine of guardian angels. A child, he said, might think himself secure in such angelic care, but let him beware of committing any of those numerous offenses which would cause his guardian to turn his face from him, for as sure as there were angels to protect us, there were also evil and awful presences which were ready to pounce; and on them he dwelt with peculiar gusto. Well, too, do I remember in the morning sermon his commentary on the carved panels of the altar-rails to which I have already alluded. There was the angel of the Annuncia-

tion there, and the angel of the Resurrection, but not less was there the witch of Endor, and, on the fourth panel, a scene that concerned me most of all. This fourth panel (he came down from his pulpit to trace its time-worn features) represented the lych-gate of the churchyard at Polearn itself, and indeed the resemblance when thus pointed out was remarkable. In the entry stood the figure of a robed priest holding up a Cross, with which he faced a terrible creature like a gigantic slug, that reared itself up in front of him. That, so ran my uncle's interpretation, was some evil agency, such as he had spoken about to us children, of almost infinite malignity and power, which could alone be combated by firm faith and a pure heart. Below ran the legend "*Negotium perambulans in tenebris*" from the ninety-first Psalm. We should find it translated there, "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," which but feebly rendered the Latin. It was more deadly to the soul than any pestilence that can only kill the body: it was the Thing, the Creature, the Business, that trafficked in the outer Darkness, a minister of God's wrath on the unrighteous. . . .

I could see, as he spoke, the looks which the congregation exchanged with each other, and knew that his words were evoking a surmise, a remembrance. Nods and whispers passed between them, they understood to what he alluded, and with the inquisitiveness of boyhood I could not rest till I had wormed the story out of my friends among the fisher-boys, as, next morning, we sat basking and naked in the sun after our bath. One knew one bit of it, one another, but it pieced together into a truly alarming legend. In bald outline it was as follows:

A church far more ancient than that in which my uncle terrified us every Sunday had once stood not three hundred yards away, on the shelf of level ground below the quarry

from which its stones were hewn. The owner of the land had pulled this down and erected for himself a house on the same site out of these materials, keeping in a very ecstasy of wickedness, the altar, and on this he dined and played dice afterwards. But as he grew old some black melancholy seized him, for he had deadly fear of the darkness. On one winter evening there sprang up such a gale as was never before known, which broke in the windows of the room where he had supped, and extinguished the lamps. Yells of terror brought in his servants, who found him lying on the floor with the blood streaming from his throat. As they entered some huge black shadow seemed to move away from him, crawled across the floor and up the wall and out of the broken window.

"There he lay a-dying," said the last of my informants, "and him that had been a great burly man was withered to a bag o' skin, for the critter had drained all the blood from him. His last breath was a scream, and he hollered out the same words as passon read off the screen."

"*Negotium perambulans in tenebris*," I suggested eagerly.

"Thereabouts. Latin anyhow."

"And after that?" I asked.

"Nobody would go near the place, and the old house rotted and fell in ruins till three years ago, when along comes Mr. Dooliss from Penzance, and built the half of it up again. But he don't care much about such critters, nor about Latin neither. He takes his bottle of whisky a day and gets drunk's a lord in the evening. Eh, I'm gwine home to my dinner."

Whatever the authenticity of the legend, I had certainly heard the truth about Mr. Dooliss from Penzance, who from that day became an object of keen curiosity on my part, the more so because the quarry-house adjoined my

uncle's garden. The Thing that walked in the dark failed to stir my imagination, and already I was so used to sleeping alone in my shelter that the night had no terrors for me. But it would be intensely exciting to wake at some timeless hour and hear Mr. Dooliss yelling, and conjecture that the Thing had got him.

But by degrees the whole story faded from my mind, overscored by the more vivid interests of the day, and, for the last two years of my outdoor life in the vicarage garden, I seldom thought about Mr. Dooliss and the possible fate that might await him for his temerity in living in the place where that Thing of darkness had done business. Occasionally I saw him over the garden fence, a great yellow lump of a man, with slow and staggering gait, but never did I set eyes on him outside his gate, either in the village street or down on the beach. He interfered with none, and no one interfered with him. If he wanted to run the risk of being the prey of the legendary nocturnal monster, or quietly drink himself to death, it was his affair. My uncle, so I gathered, had made several attempts to see him when first he came to live at Polearn, but Mr. Dooliss appeared to have no use for parsons, said he was not at home and never returned the call.

After three years of sun, wind, and rain, I had completely outgrown my early symptoms and had become a tough, strapping youngster of thirteen. I was sent to Eton and Cambridge, and in due course ate my dinners and became a barrister. In twenty years from that time I was earning a yearly income of five figures, and had already laid by in sound securities a sum that brought me dividends which would, for one of my simple tastes and frugal habits, supply me with all the material comforts I needed on this side of

the grave. The great prizes of my profession were already within my reach, but I had no ambition beckoning me on, nor did I want a wife and children, being, I must suppose, a natural celibate. In fact, there was only one ambition which through these busy years had held the lure of blue and far-off hills to me, and that was to get back to Polearn, and live once more isolated from the world with the sea and the gorse-clad hills for playfellows, and the secrets that lurked there for exploration. The spell of it had been woven about my heart, and I can truly say that there had hardly passed a day in all those years in which the thought of it and the desire for it had been wholly absent from my mind. Though I had been in frequent communication with my uncle there during his lifetime, and, after his death, with his widow, who still lived there, I had never been back to it since I embarked on my profession, for I knew that if I went there, it would be a wrench beyond my power to tear myself away again. But I had made up my mind that when once I had provided for my own independence, I would go back there not to leave it again. And yet I did leave it again, and now nothing in the world would induce me to turn down the lane from the road that leads from Penzance to the Land's End, and see the sides of the combe rise steep above the roofs of the village and hear the gulls chiding as they fish in the bay. One of the things invisible, of the dark powers, leaped into light, and I saw it with my eyes.

The house where I had spent those three years of boyhood had been left for life to my aunt, and when I made known to her my intention of coming back to Polearn, she suggested that, till I found a suitable house or found her proposal unsuitable, I should come to live with her.

"The house is too big for a lone old woman," she wrote, "and I have often thought of quitting it and taking a

little cottage sufficient for me and my requirements. But come and share it, my dear, and if you find me troublesome, you or I can go. You may want solitude—most people in Polearn do—and will leave me. Or else I will leave you: one of the main reasons of my stopping here all these years was a feeling that I must not let the old house starve. Houses starve, you know, if they are not lived in. They die a lingering death; the spirit in them grows weaker and weaker, and at last fades out of them. Isn't this nonsense to your London notions? . . . ”

Naturally I accepted with warmth this tentative arrangement, and on an evening in June found myself at the head of the lane leading down to Polearn, and once more I descended into the steep valley between the hills. Time had stood still apparently for the combe, the dilapidated signpost (or its successor) pointed a rickety finger down the lane, and a few hundred yards farther on was the white box for the exchange of letters. Point after remembered point met my eye, and what I saw was not shrunk, as is often the case with the revisited scenes of childhood, into a smaller scale. There stood the post-office, and there the church and close beside it the vicarage, and beyond, the tall shrubberies which separated the house for which I was bound from the road, and beyond that again the gray roofs of the quarry-house damp and shining with the moist evening wind from the sea. All was exactly as I remembered it, and, above all, that sense of seclusion and isolation. Somewhere above the tree-tops climbed the lane which joined the main road to Penzance, but all that had become immeasurably distant. The years that had passed since last I turned in at the well-known gate faded like a frosty breath, and vanished in this warm, soft air. There were law-courts somewhere in memory's dull book which, if I cared to turn the pages,

would tell me that I had made a name and a great income there. But the dull book was closed now, for I was back in Polearn, and the spell was woven around me again.

And if Polearn was unchanged, so too was Aunt Hester, who met me at the door. Dainty and china-white she had always been, and the years had not aged but only refined her. As we sat and talked after dinner she spoke of all that had happened in Polearn in that score of years, and yet somehow the changes of which she spoke seemed to confirm the immutability of it all. As the recollection of names came back to me, I asked her about the quarry-house and Mr. Dooliss, and her face gloomed a little as with the shadow of a cloud on a spring day.

"Yes, Mr. Dooliss," she said, "poor Mr. Dooliss, how well I remember him, though it must be ten years and more since he died. I never wrote to you about it, for it was all very dreadful, my dear, and I did not want to darken your memories of Polearn. Your uncle always thought that something of the sort might happen if he went on in his wicked, drunken ways, and worse than that, and though nobody knew exactly what took place, it was the sort of thing that might have been anticipated."

"But what more or less happened, Aunt Hester?" I asked.

"Well, of course I can't tell you everything, for no one knew it. But he was a very sinful man, and the scandal about him at Newlyn was shocking. And then he lived, too, in the quarry-house. . . . I wonder if by any chance you remember a sermon of your uncle's when he got out of the pulpit and explained that panel in the altar-rails, the one, I mean with the horrible creature rearing itself up outside the lych-gate?"

"Yes, I remember perfectly," said I.

"Ah. It made an impression on you, I suppose, and so

it did on all who heard him, and that impression got stamped and branded on us all when the catastrophe occurred. Somehow Mr. Dooliss got to hear about your uncle's sermon, and in some drunken fit he broke into the church and smashed the panel to atoms. He seems to have thought that there was some magic in it, and that if he destroyed that he would get rid of the terrible fate that was threatening him. For I must tell you that before he committed that dreadful sacrilege he had been a haunted man; he hated and feared darkness, for he thought that the creature on the panel was on his track, but that as long as he kept lights burning it could not touch him. But the panel, to his disordered mind, was the root of his terror, and so, as I said, he broke into the church and attempted—you will see why I said 'attempted'—to destroy it. It certainly was found in splinters next morning, when your uncle went into church for matins, and knowing Mr. Dooliss's fear of the panel, he went across to the quarry-house afterwards and taxed him with its destruction. The man never denied it; he boasted of what he had done. There he sat, though it was early morning, drinking his whisky.

"'I've settled your Thing for you,' he said, 'and your sermon, too. A fig for such superstitions.'

"Your uncle left him without answering his blasphemy, meaning to go straight into Penzance and give information to the police about this outrage to the church, but on his way back from the quarry-house he went into the church again, in order to be able to give details about the damage, and there in the screen was the panel, untouched and uninjured. And yet he had himself seen it smashed, and Mr. Dooliss had confessed that the destruction of it was his work. But there it was, and whether the power of God had mended it or some other power, who knows?"

This was Polearn indeed, and it was the spirit of Polearn that made me accept all Aunt Hester was telling me as attested fact. It had happened like that. She went on in her quiet voice:

“Your uncle recognized that some power beyond police was at work, and he did not go to Penzance or give information about the outrage, for the evidence of it had vanished.”

A sudden spate of skepticism swept over me.

“There must have been some mistake,” I said. “It hadn’t been broken. . . .”

She smiled.

“Yes, my dear, but you have been in London so long,” she said. “Let me, anyhow, tell you the rest of my story. That night, for some reason, I could not sleep. It was very hot and airless; I dare say you will think that the sultry conditions accounted for my wakefulness. Once and again, as I went to the window to see if I could not admit more air, I could see from it the quarry-house, and I noticed the first time that I left my bed that it was blazing with lights. But the second time I saw that it was all in darkness, and as I wondered at that, I heard a terrible scream, and the moment afterwards the steps of some one coming at full speed down the road outside the gate. He yelled as he ran: ‘Light, light!’ he called out. ‘Give me light, or it will catch me!’ It was very terrible to hear that, and I went to rouse my husband, who was sleeping in the dressing-room across the passage. He wasted no time, but by now the whole village was aroused by the screams, and when he got down to the pier he found that all was over. The tide was low, and on the rocks at its foot was lying the body of Mr. Dooliss. He must have cut some artery when he fell on those sharp edges of stone, for he had bled to death, they thought, and though

he was a big burly man, his corpse was but skin and bones. Yet there was no pool of blood round him, such as you would have expected. Just skin and bones as if every drop of blood in his body had been sucked out of him!"

She leaned forward.

"You and I, my dear, know what happened," she said, "or at least can guess. God has His instruments of vengeance on those who bring wickedness into places that have been holy. Dark and mysterious are His ways."

Now what I should have thought of such a story if it had been told me in London I can easily imagine. There was such an obvious explanation: the man in question had been a drunkard; what wonder if the demons of delirium pursued him? But here in Polearn it was different.

"And who is in the quarry-house now?" I asked. "Years ago the fisher-boys told me the story of the man who first built it and of his horrible end. And now again it has happened. Surely no one has ventured to inhabit it once more?"

I saw in her face, even before I asked that question, that somebody had done so.

"Yes, it is lived in again," said she, "for there is no end to the blindness. . . . I don't know if you remember him. He was tenant of the vicarage many years ago."

"John Evans," said I.

"Yes. Such a nice fellow he was, too. Your uncle was pleased to get so good a tenant. And now——"

She rose.

"Aunt Hester, you shouldn't leave your sentences unfinished," I said.

She shook her head.

"My dear, that sentence will finish itself," she said. "But what a time of night! I must go to bed, and you too, or they

will think we have to keep lights burning here through the dark hours.”

Before getting into bed I drew my curtains wide and opened all the windows to the warm tide of the sea air that flowed softly in. Looking out into the garden I could see in the moonlight the roof of the shelter, in which for three years I had lived, gleaming with dew. That, as much as anything, brought back the old days to which I had now returned, and they seemed of one piece with the present, as if no gap of more than twenty years sundered them. The two flowed into one like globules of mercury uniting into a softly shining globe of mysterious lights and reflections. Then, raising my eyes a little, I saw against the black hill-side the windows of the quarry-house still alight.

Morning, as is so often the case, brought no shattering of my illusion. As I began to regain consciousness, I fancied that I was a boy again waking up in the shelter in the garden, and though, as I grew more widely awake, I smiled at the impression, that on which it was based I found to be indeed true. It was sufficient now as then to be here, to wander again on the cliffs, and hear the popping of the ripened seed-pods on the gorse-bushes; to stray along the shore to the bathing-cove, to float and drift and swim in the warm tide, and bask on the sand, and watch the gulls fishing, to lounge on the pier-head with the fisher-folk, to see in their eyes and hear in their quiet speech the evidence of secret things not so much known to them as part of their instincts and their very being. There were powers and presences about me; the white poplars that stood by the stream that babbled down the valley knew of them, and showed a glimpse of their knowledge sometimes, like the gleam of their white underleaves; the very cobbles that paved the street were soaked in it. . . . All that I wanted was to lie

there and grow soaked in it too; unconsciously, as a boy, I had done that, but now the process must be conscious. I must know what stir of forces, fruitful and mysterious, seethed along the hillside at noon, and sparkled at night on the sea. They could be known, they could even be controlled by those who were masters of the spell, but never could they be spoken of, for they were dwellers in the innermost, grafted into the eternal life of the world. There were dark secrets as well as these clear, kindly powers, and to these no doubt belonged that *negotium perambulans in tenebris* which, though of deadly malignity, might be regarded not only as evil, but as the avenger of sacrilegious and impious deeds. . . . All this was part of the spell of Polearn, of which the seeds had long lain dormant in me. But now they were sprouting, and who knew what strange flower would unfold on their stems?

It was not long before I came across John Evans. One morning, as I lay on the beach, there came shambling across the sand a man stout and middle-aged with the face of Silenus. He paused as he drew near and regarded me from narrow eyes.

“Why, you’re the little chap that used to live in the parson’s garden,” he said. “Don’t you recognize me?”

I saw who it was when he spoke; his voice, I think, instructed me, and, recognizing it, I could see the features of the strong, alert young man in this gross caricature.

“Yes, you’re John Evans,” I said. “You used to be very kind to me: you used to draw pictures for me.”

“So I did, and I’ll draw you some more. Been bathing? That’s a risky performance. You never know what lives in the sea, nor what lives on the land for that matter. Not that I heed them. I stick to work and whisky. God! I’ve learned to paint since I saw you, and drink too for that matter. I

live in the quarry-house, you know, and it's a powerful thirsty place. Come and have a look at my things if you're passing. Staying with your aunt, are you? I could do a wonderful portrait of her. Interesting face; she knows a lot. People who live at Polearn get to know a lot, though I don't take much stock in that sort of knowledge myself."

I do not know when I have been at once so repelled and interested. Behind the mere grossness of his face there lurked something which, while it appalled, yet fascinated me. His thick lisping speech had the same quality. And his paintings, what would they be like? . . .

"I was just going home," I said. "I'll gladly come in, if you'll allow me."

He took me through the untended and overgrown garden into the house which I had never yet entered. A great gray cat was sunning itself in the window, and an old woman was laying lunch in a corner of the cool hall into which the door opened. It was built of stone, and the carved moldings let into the walls, the fragments of gargoyles and sculptured images, bore testimony to the truth of its having been built out of the demolished church. In one corner was an oblong and carved wooden table littered with a painter's apparatus and stacks of canvases leaned against the walls.

He jerked his thumb towards a head of an angel that was built into the mantelpiece and giggled.

"Quite a sanctified air," he said, "so we tone it down for the purposes of ordinary life by a different sort of art. Have a drink? No? Well, turn over some of my pictures while I put myself to rights."

He was justified in his own estimate of his skill: he could paint (and apparently he could paint anything), but never have I seen pictures so inexplicably hellish. There were ex-

quisite studies of trees, and yet you knew that something lurked in the flickering shadows. There was a drawing of his cat sunning itself in the window, even as I had just now seen it, and yet it was no cat but some beast of awful malignity. There was a boy stretched naked on the sands, not human, but some evil thing which had come out of the sea. Above all there were pictures of his garden overgrown and jungle-like, and you knew that in the bushes were presences ready to spring out on you. . . .

“Well, do you like my style?” he said as he came up, glass in hand. (The tumbler of spirits that he held had not been diluted.) “I try to paint the essence of what I see, not the mere husk and skin of it, but its nature, where it comes from and what gave it birth. There’s much in common between a cat and a fuchsia-bush if you look at them closely enough. Everything came out of the slime of the pit, and it’s all going back there. I should like to do a picture of you some day. I’d hold the mirror up to Nature, as that old lunatic said.”

After this first meeting I saw him occasionally throughout the months of that wonderful summer. Often he kept to his house and to his painting for days together, and then perhaps some evening I would find him lounging on the pier, always alone, and every time we met thus the repulsion and interest grew, for every time he seemed to have gone farther along a path of secret knowledge towards some evil shrine where complete initiation awaited him. . . . And then suddenly the end came.

I had met him thus one evening on the cliffs while the October sunset still burned in the sky, but over it with amazing rapidity there spread from the west a great blackness of cloud such as I have never seen for denseness. The light

was sucked from the sky, the dusk fell in ever thicker layers. He suddenly became conscious of this.

"I must get back as quick as I can," he said. "It will be dark in a few minutes, and my servant is out. The lamps will not be lit."

He stepped out with extraordinary briskness for one who shambled and could scarcely lift his feet, and soon broke out into a stumbling run. In the gathering darkness I could see that his face was moist with the dew of some unspoken terror.

"You must come with me," he panted, "for so we shall get the lights burning the sooner. I cannot do without light."

I had to exert myself to the full to keep up with him, for terror winged him, and even so I fell behind, so that when I came to the garden gate, he was already half-way up the path to the house. I saw him enter, leaving the door wide, and found him fumbling with matches. But his hand so trembled that he could not transfer the light to the wick of the lamp.

"But what's the hurry about," I asked.

Suddenly his eyes focused themselves on the open door behind me, and he jumped from his seat beside the table which had once been the altar of God, with a gasp and a scream.

"No, no!" he cried, "Keep it off! . . ."

I turned and saw what he had seen. The Thing had entered and now was swiftly sliding across the floor towards him, like some gigantic caterpillar. A stale phosphorescent light came from it, for though the dusk had grown to blackness outside, I could see it quite distinctly in the awful light of its own presence. From it too there came an odor of corruption and decay, as from slime that has long lain below water. It seemed to have no head, but on the front of it was

an orifice of puckered skin which opened and shut and slavered at the edges. It was hairless, and slug-like in shape and in texture. As it advanced its forepart reared itself from the ground, like a snake about to strike, and it fastened on him. . . .

At that sight, and with the yells of his agony in my ears, the panic which had struck me relaxed into a hopeless courage, and with palsied, impotent hands I tried to lay hold of the Thing. But I could not: though something material was there, it was impossible to grasp it; my hands sunk in it as in thick mud. It was like wrestling with a nightmare.

I think that but a few seconds elapsed before all was over. The screams of the wretched man sank to moans and mutterings as the Thing fell on him: he panted once or twice and was still. For a moment longer there came gurglings and sucking noises, and then it slid out even as it had entered. I lit the lamp which he had fumbled with, and there on the floor he lay, no more than a rind of skin in loose folds over projecting bones.

BACK THERE IN THE GRASS

BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

It was spring in the South Seas when, for the first time, I went ashore at Batengo, which is the Polynesian village, and the only one on the big grass island of the same name. There is a cable station just up the beach from the village, and a good-natured young chap named Graves had charge of it. He was an upstanding, clean-cut fellow, as the fact that he had been among the islands for three years without falling into any of their ways proved. The interior of the corrugated iron house in which he lived, for instance, was bachelor from A to Z. And if that wasn't a sufficient alibi, my pointer dog, Don, who dislikes anything Polynesian or Melanesian, took to him at once. And they established a romping friendship. He gave us lunch on the porch, and because he had not seen a white man for two months, or a liver-and-white dog for two years, he told us the entire story of his young life, with reminiscences of early childhood and plans for the future thrown in.

The future was very simple. There was a girl coming out to him from the States by the next steamer but one; the captain of that steamer would join them together in holy wedlock, and after that the Lord would provide.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you think I'm asking her to share a very lonely sort of life, but if you could imagine all the—the affection and gentleness, and thoughtfulness that I've got stored up to pour out at her feet for the rest of

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our lives, you wouldn't be a bit afraid for her happiness. If a man spends his whole time and imagination thinking up ways to make a girl happy and occupied, he can think up a whole lot. . . . I'd like ever so much to show her to you."

He led the way to his bedroom, and stood in silent rapture before a large photograph that leaned against the wall over his dressing-table.

She didn't look to me like the sort of girl a cable agent would happen to marry. She looked like a swell—the real thing—beautiful and simple and unaffected.

"Yes," he said, "isn't she?"

I hadn't spoken a word. Now I said:

"It's easy to see why you aren't lonely with that wonderful girl to look at. Is she really coming out by the next steamer but one? It's hard to believe because she's so much too good to be true."

"Yes," he said, "isn't she?"

"The usual cable agent," I said, "keeps from going mad by having a dog or a cat or some pet or other to talk to. But I can understand a photograph like this being all-sufficient to any man—even if he had never seen the original. Allow me to shake hands with you."

Then I got him away from the girl, because my time was short and I wanted to find out about some things that were important to *me*.

"You haven't asked me my business in these parts," I said, "but I'll tell you. I'm collecting grasses for the Bronx Botanical Garden."

"Then, by Jove!" said Graves, "you have certainly come to the right place. There used to be a tree on this island, but the last man who saw it died in 1789—Grass! The place

is all grass: there are fifty kinds right around my house here."

"I've noticed only eighteen," I said, "but that isn't the point. The point is: when do the Batengo Island grasses begin to go to seed?" And I smiled.

"You think you've got me stumped, don't you?" he said. "That a mere cable agent wouldn't notice such things. Well, that grass there," and he pointed—"beach nut we call it—is the first to ripen seed, and, as far as I know, it does it just six weeks from now."

"Are you just making things up to impress me?"

"No, sir, I am not. I know to the minute. You see, I'm a victim of hay-fever."

"In that case," I said, "expect me back about the time your nose begins to run."

"Really?" And his whole face lighted up. "I'm delighted. Only six weeks. Why, then, if you'll stay round for only five or six weeks *more* you'll be here for the wedding."

"I'll make it if I possibly can," I said. "I want to see if that girl's really true."

"Anything I can do to help you while you're gone? I've got loads of spare time——"

"If you knew anything about grasses——"

"I don't. But I'll blow back into the interior and look around. I've been meaning to right along, just for fun. But I can never get any of *them* to go with me."

"The natives?"

"Yes. Poor lot. They're committing race suicide as fast as they can. There are more wooden gods than people in Batengo village, and the superstition's so thick you could cut it with a knife. All the manly virtues have perished. . . . Aloiu!"

The boy who did Graves's chores for him came lazily out of the house.

"Aloiu," said Graves, "just run back into the island to the top of that hill—see?—that one over there—and fetch a handful of grass for this gentleman. He'll give you five dollars for it."

Aloiu grinned sheepishly and shook his head.

"Fifty dollars?"

Aloiu shook his head with even more firmness, and I whistled. Fifty dollars would have made him the Rockefeller-Carnegie-Morgan of those parts.

"All right, coward," said Graves cheerfully. "Run away and play with the other children. . . . Now, isn't that curious? Neither love, money, nor insult will drag one of them a mile from the beach. They say that if you go 'back there in the grass' something awful will happen to you."

"As what?" I asked.

"The last man to try it," said Graves, "in the memory of the oldest inhabitant was a woman. When they found her she was all black and swollen—at least that's what they say. Something had bitten her just above the ankle."

"Nonsense," I said, "there are no snakes in the whole Batengo group."

"They didn't say it was a snake," said Graves. "They said the marks of the bite were like those that would be made by the teeth of a very little—child."

Graves rose and stretched himself.

"What's the use of arguing with people that tell yarns like that! All the same, if you're bent on making expeditions back into the grass, you'll make 'em alone, unless the cable breaks and I'm free to make 'em with you."

Five weeks later I was once more coasting along the wavering hills of Batengo Island, with a sharp eye out for

a first sight of the cable station and Graves. Five weeks with no company but Kanakas and a pointer dog makes one white man pretty keen for the society of another. Furthermore, at our one meeting I had taken a great shine to Graves and to the charming young lady who was to brave a life in the South Seas for his sake. If I was eager to get ashore, Don was more so. I had a shot-gun across my knees with which to salute the cable station, and the sight of that weapon, coupled with toothsome memories of a recent big hunt down on Forked Peak, had set the dog quivering from stem to stern, to crouching, wagging his tail till it disappeared, and beating sudden tattoos upon the deck with his forepaws. And when at last we rounded on the cable station and I let off both barrels, he began to bark and race about the schooner like a thing possessed.

The salute brought Graves out of his house. He stood on the porch waving a handkerchief, and I called to him through a megaphone; hoped that he was well, said how glad I was to see him, and asked him to meet me in Batengo village.

Even at that distance I detected a something irresolute in his manner; and a few minutes later when he had fetched a hat out of the house, locked the door, and headed toward the village, he looked more like a soldier marching to battle than a man walking half a mile to greet a friend.

"That's funny," I said to Don. "He's coming to meet us in spite of the fact that he'd much rather not. Oh, well!"

I left the schooner while she was still under way, and reached the beach before Graves came up. There were too many strange brown men to suit Don, and he kept very close to my legs. When Graves arrived the natives fell away from him as if he had been a leper. He wore a sort of sickly smile,

and when he spoke the dog stiffened his legs and growled menacingly.

“Don!” I exclaimed sternly, and the dog cowered, but the spines along his back bristled and he kept a menacing eye upon Graves. The man’s face looked drawn and rather angry. The frank boyishness was clean out of it. He had been strained by something or other to the breaking-point—so much was evident.

“My dear fellow,” I said, “what the devil is the matter?”

Graves looked to right and left, and the islanders shrank still farther away from him.

“You can see for yourself,” he said curtly. “I’m taboo.” And then, with a little break in his voice: “Even your dog feels it. Don, good boy! Come here, sir!”

Don growled quietly.

“You see!”

“Don,” I said sharply, “this man is my friend and yours. Pat him, Graves.”

Graves reached forward and patted Don’s head and talked to him soothingly.

But although Don did not growl or menace, he shivered under the caress and was unhappy.

“So you’re taboo!” I said cheerfully. “That’s the result of anything, from stringing pink and yellow shells on the same string to murdering your uncle’s grandmother-in-law. Which have *you* done?”

“I’ve been back there in the grass,” he said, “and because—because nothing happened to me I’m taboo.”

“Is that all?”

“As far as they know—yes.”

“Well!” said I, “my business will take me back there for days at a time, so I’ll be taboo, too. Then there’ll be two of us. Did you find any curious grasses for me?”

"I don't know about grasses," he said, "but I found something very curious that I want to show you and ask your advice about. Are you going to share my house?"

"I think I'll keep headquarters on the schooner," I said, "but if you'll put me up now and then for a meal or for the night——"

"I'll put you up for lunch right now," he said, "if you'll come. I'm my own cook and bottle-washer since the taboo, but I must say the change isn't for the worse so far as food goes."

He was looking and speaking more cheerfully.

"May I bring Don?"

He hesitated.

"Why—yes—of course."

"If you'd rather not?"

"No, bring him. I want to make friends again if I can."

So we started for Grave's house, Don very close at my heels.

"Graves," I said, "surely a taboo by a lot of fool islanders hasn't upset you. There's something on your mind. Bad news?"

"Oh, no," he said. "She's coming. It's other things. I'll tell you by and by—everything. Don't mind me. I'm all right. Listen to the wind in the grass. That sound day and night is enough to put a man off his feed."

"You say you found something very curious back there in the grass?"

"I found, among other things, a stone monolith. It's fallen down, but it's almost as big as the Flatiron Building in New York. It's ancient as days—all carved—it's a sort of woman, I think. But we'll go back one day and have a look at it. Then, of course, I saw all the different kinds of grasses in the world—they'd interest you more—but I'm

such a punk botanist that I gave up trying to tell 'em apart. I like the flowers best—there's millions of 'em—down among the grass. . . . I tell you, old man, this island is the greatest curiosity-shop in the whole world."

He unlocked the door of his house and stood aside for me to go in first.

"Shut up, Don!"

The dog growled savagely, but I banded him with my open hand across the snout, and he quieted down and followed into the house, all tense and watchful.

On the shelf where Graves kept his books, with its legs hanging over, was what I took to be an idol of some light brownish wood—say sandalwood, with a touch of pink. But it was the most lifelike and astounding piece of carving I ever saw in the islands or out of them. It was about a foot high, and represented a Polynesian woman in the prime of life, say, fifteen or sixteen years old, only the features were finer and cleaner carved. It was a nude, in an attitude of easy repose—the legs hanging, the toes dangling—the hands resting, palms downward, on the blotter, the trunk relaxed. The eyes, which were a kind of steely blue, seemed to have been made, depth upon depth, of some wonderful translucent enamel, and to make his work still more realistic the artist had planted the statuette's eyebrows, eyelashes, and scalp with real hair, very soft and silky, brown on the head and black for the lashes and eyebrows. The thing was so lifelike that it frightened me. And when Don began to growl like distant thunder I didn't blame him. But I leaned over and caught him by the collar, because it was evident that he wanted to get at that statuette and destroy it.

When I looked up the statuette's eyes had moved. They were turned downward upon the dog, with cool curiosity and indifference. A kind of shudder went through me. And

then, lo and behold, the statuette's tiny brown breasts rose and fell slowly, and a long breath came out of its nostrils.

I backed violently into Graves, dragging Don with me and half-choking him. "My God Almighty!" I said. "It's alive!"

"Isn't she!" said he. "I caught her back there in the grass—the little minx. And when I heard your signal I put her up there to keep her out of mischief. It's too high for her to jump—and she's very sore about it."

"You found her in the grass," I said. "For God's sake!—are there more of them?"

"Thick as quail," said he, "but it's hard to get a sight of 'em. But *you* were overcome by curiosity, weren't you, old girl? You came out to have a look at the big white giant and he caught you with his thumb and forefinger by the scruff of the neck—so you couldn't bite him—and here you are."

The womankin's lips parted and I saw a flash of white teeth. She looked up into Grave's face and the steely eyes softened. It was evident that she was very fond of him.

"Rum sort of a pet," said Graves. "What?"

"Rum?" I said. "It's horrible—it isn't decent—it—it ought to be taboo. Don's got it sized up right. He—he wants to kill it."

"Please don't keep calling her It," said Graves. "She wouldn't like it—if she understood." Then he whispered words that were Greek to me, and the womankin laughed aloud. Her laugh was sweet and tinkly, like the upper notes of a spinet.

"You can speak her language?"

"A few words—Tog ma Lao?"

"Na!"

"Aba Ton sug ato."

"Nan Tane dom ud lon anea!"

It sounded like that—only all whispered and very soft. It sounded a little like the wind in the grass.

“She says she isn’t afraid of the dog,” said Graves, “and that he’d better let her alone.”

“I almost hope he won’t,” said I. “Come outside. I don’t like her. I think I’ve got a touch of the horrors.”

Graves remained behind a moment to lift the womankin down from the shelf, and when he rejoined me I had made up my mind to talk to him like a father.

“Graves,” I said, “although that creature in there is only a foot high, it isn’t a pig or a monkey, it’s a woman and you’re guilty of what’s considered a pretty ugly crime at home—abduction. You’ve stolen this woman away from kith and kin, and the least you can do is to carry her back where you found her and turn her loose. Let me ask you one thing—what would Miss Chester think?”

“Oh, that doesn’t worry me,” said Graves. “But I *am* worried—worried sick. It’s early—shall we talk now, or wait till after lunch?”

“Now,” I said.

“Well,” said he, “you left me pretty well enthused on the subject of botany—so I went back there twice to look up grasses for you. The second time I went I got to a deep sort of valley where the grass is waisthigh—that, by the way, is where the big monolith is—and that place was alive with things that were frightened and ran. I could see the directions they took by the way the grass tops acted. There were lots of loose stones about and I began to throw ’em to see if I could knock one of the things over. Suddenly all at once I saw a pair of bright little eyes peering out of a bunch of grass—I let fly at them, and something gave a sort of moan and thrashed about in the grass—and then lay still. I went to look, and found that I’d stunned—*her*. She came

to and tried to bite me, but I had her by the scruff of the neck and she couldn't. Further, she was sick with being hit in the chest with the stone, and first thing I knew she keeled over in the palm of my hand in a dead faint. I couldn't find any water or anything—and I didn't want her to die—so I brought her home. She was sick for a week—and I took care of her—as I would a sick pup—and she began to get well and want to play and romp and poke into everything. She'd get the lower drawer of my desk open and hide in it—or crawl into a rubber boot and play house. And she got to be right good company—same as any pet does—a cat or a dog—or a monkey—and naturally, she being so small, I couldn't think of her as anything but a sort of little beast that I'd caught and tamed. . . . You see how it all happened, don't you? Might have happened to anybody."

"Why, yes," I said. "If she didn't give a man the horrors right at the start—I can understand making a sort of pet of her—but, man, there's only one thing to do. Be persuaded. Take her back where you found her, and turn her loose."

"Well and good," said Graves. "I tried that, and next morning I found her at my door, sobbing—horrible, dry sobs—no tears. . . . You've said one thing that's full of sense: she isn't a pig—or a monkey—she's a woman."

"You don't mean to say," said I, "that that mite of a thing is in love with you?"

"I don't know what else you'd call it."

"Graves," I said, "Miss Chester arrives by the next steamer. In the meanwhile something has got to be done."

"What?" said he hopelessly.

"I don't know," I said. "Let me think."

The dog Don laid his head heavily on my knee, as if he wished to offer a solution of the difficulty.

A week before Miss Chester's steamer was due the situation had not changed. Graves's pet was as much a fixture of Graves's house as the front door. And a man was never confronted with a more serious problem. Twice he carried her back into the grass and deserted her, and each time she returned and was found sobbing—horrible, dry sobs—on the porch. And a number of times we took her, or Graves did, in the pocket of his jacket, upon systematic searches for her people. Doubtless she could have helped us to find them, but she wouldn't. She was very sullen on these expeditions and frightened. When Graves tried to put her down she would cling to him, and it took real force to pry her loose.

In the open she could run like a rat; and in open country it would have been impossible to desert her; she would have followed at Graves's heels as fast as he could move them. But forcing through the thick grass tired her after a few hundred yards, and she would gradually drop farther and farther behind—sobbing. There was a pathetic side to it.

She hated me; and made no bones about it; but there was an armed truce between us. She feared my influence over Graves, and I feared her—well, just as some people fear rats or snakes. Things utterly out of the normal always do worry me, and Bo, which was the name Graves had learned for her, was, so far as I know, unique in human experience. In appearance she was like an unusually good-looking island girl observed through the wrong end of an opera-glass, but in habit and action she was different. She would catch flies and little grasshoppers and eat them all alive and kicking, and if you teased her more than she liked her ears would flatten the way a cat's do, and she would hiss like a snapping-turtle, and show her teeth.

But one got accustomed to her. Even poor Don learned that it was not his duty to punish her with one bound and

a snap. But he would never let her touch him, believing that in her case discretion was the better part of valor. If she approached him he withdrew, always with dignity, but equally with determination. He knew in his heart that something about her was horribly wrong and against nature. I knew it, too, and I think Graves began to suspect it.

Well, a day came when Graves, who had been up since dawn, saw the smoke of a steamer along the horizon, and began to fire off his revolver so that I, too, might wake and participate in his joy. I made tea and went ashore.

"It's *her* steamer," he said.

"Yes," said I, "and we've got to decide something."

"About Bo?"

"Suppose I take her off your hands—for a week or so—till you and Miss Chester have settled down and put your house in order. Then Miss Chester—Mrs. Graves, that is—can decide what is to be done. I admit that I'd rather wash my hands of the business—but I'm the only white man available, and I propose to stand by my race. Don't say a word to Bo—just bring her out to the schooner and leave her."

In the upshot Graves accepted my offer, and while Bo, fairly bristling with excitement and curiosity, was exploring the farther corners of my cabin, we slipped out and locked the door on her. The minute she knew what had happened she began to tear around and raise Cain. It sounded a little like a cat having a fit.

Graves was white and unhappy. "Let's get away quick," he said; "I feel like a skunk."

But Miss Chester was everything that her photograph said about her, and more too, so that the trick he had played Bo was very soon a negligible weight on Graves's mind.

If the wedding was quick and business-like, it was also jolly and romantic. The oldest passenger gave the bride

away. All the crew came aft and sang "The Voice That Breathed O'er E-den That Earliest Wedding-Day"—to the tune called "Blairgowrie." They had worked it up in secret for a surprise. And the bride's dove-brown eyes got a little teary. I was best man. The captain read the service, and choked occasionally. As for Graves—I had never thought him handsome—well, with his brown face and white linen suit, he made me think, and I'm sure I don't know why, of St. Michael—that time he overcame Lucifer. The captain blew us to breakfast, with champagne and a cake, and then the happy pair went ashore in a boat full of the bride's trousseau, and the crew manned the bulwarks and gave three cheers, and then something like twenty-seven more, and last thing of all the brass cannon was fired, and the little square flags that spell G-o-o-d L-u-c-k were run up on the signal halyards.

As for me, I went back to my schooner feeling blue and lonely. I knew little about women and less about love. It didn't seem quite fair. For once I hated my profession—seed-gatherer to a body of scientific gentlemen whom I had never seen. Well, there's nothing so good for the blues as putting things in order.

I cleaned my rifle and revolver. I wrote up my notebook. I developed some plates; I studied a brand-new book on South Sea grasses that had been sent out to me, and I found some mistakes. I went ashore with Don, and had a long walk on the beach—in the opposite direction from Graves's house, of course—and I sent Don into the water after sticks, and he seemed to enjoy it, and so I stripped and went in with him. Then I dried in the sun, and had a match with my hands to see which could find the tiniest shell. Toward dusk we returned to the schooner and had dinner, and after that I went into my cabin to see how Bo was getting on.

She flew at me like a cat, and if I hadn't jerked my foot back she must have bitten me. As it was, her teeth tore a piece out of my trousers. I'm afraid I kicked her. Anyway, I heard her land with a crash in a far corner. I struck a match and lighted candles—they are cooler than lamps—very warily—one eye on Bo. She had retreated under a chair and looked out—very sullen and angry. I sat down and began to talk to her. "It's no use," I said, "you're trying to bite and scratch, because you're only as big as a minute. So come out here and make friends. I don't like you and you don't like me; but we're going to be thrown together for quite some time, so we'd better make the best of it. You come out here and behave pretty and I'll give you a bit of gingersnap."

The last word was intelligible to her, and she came a little way out from under the chair. I had a bit of gingersnap in my pocket, left over from treating Don, and I tossed it on the floor midway between us. She darted forward and ate it with quick bites.

Well, then, she looked up, and her eyes asked—just as plain as day: "Why are things thus? Why have I come to live with you? I don't like you. I want to go back to Graves."

I couldn't explain very well, and just shook my head and then went on trying to make friends—it was no use. She hated me, and after a time I got bored. I threw a pillow on the floor for her to sleep on, and left her. Well, the minute the door was shut and locked she began to sob. You could hear her for quite a distance, and I couldn't stand it. So I went back—and talked to her as nicely and soothingly as I could. But she wouldn't even look at me—just lay face down—heaving and sobbing.

Now I don't like little creatures that snap—so when I picked her up it was by the scruff of the neck. She had to

face me then, and I saw that in spite of all the sobbing her eyes were perfectly dry. That struck me as curious. I examined them through a pocket magnifying-glass, and discovered that they had no tear-ducts. Of course she couldn't cry. Perhaps I squeezed the back of her neck harder than I meant to—anyway, her lips began to draw back and her teeth to show.

It was exactly at that second that I recalled the legend Graves had told me about the island woman being found dead, and all black and swollen, back there in the grass, with teeth marks on her that looked as if they had been made by a very little child.

I forced Bo's mouth wide open and looked in. Then I reached for a candle and held it steadily between her face and mine. She struggled furiously so that I had to put down the candle and catch her legs together in my free hand. But I had seen enough. I felt wet and cold all over. For if the swollen glands at the base of the deeply grooved canines meant anything, that which I held between my hands was not a woman—but a snake.

I put her in a wooden box that had contained soap and nailed slats over the top. And, personally, I was quite willing to put scrap-iron in the box with her and fling it overboard. But I did not feel quite justified without consulting Graves.

As an extra precaution in case of accidents, I overhauled my medicine-chest and made up a little package for the breast pocket—a lancet, a rubber bandage, and a pill-box full of permanganate crystals. I had still much collecting to do, "back there in the grass," and I did not propose to step on any of Bo's cousins or her sisters or her aunts—without having some of the elementary first-aids to the snake-bitten handy.

It was a lovely starry night, and I determined to sleep on deck. Before turning in I went to have a look at Bo. Having nailed her in a box securely, as I thought, I must have left my cabin door ajar. Anyhow she was gone. She must have braced her back against one side of the box, her feet against the other and burst it open. I had most certainly underestimated her strength and resources.

The crew, warned of peril, searched the whole schooner over, slowly and methodically, lighted by lanterns. We could not find her. Well, swimming comes natural to snakes.

I went ashore as quickly as I could get a boat manned and rowed. I took Don on a leash, a shot-gun loaded, and both pockets of my jacket full of cartridges. We ran swiftly along the beach, Don and I, and then turned into the grass to make a short cut for Graves's house. All of a sudden Don began to tremble with eagerness and nuzzle and sniff among the roots of the grass. He was "making game."

"Good Don," I said, "good boy—hunt her up! Find her!"

The moon had risen. I saw two figures standing in the porch of Graves's house. I was about to call to them and warn Graves that Bo was loose and dangerous—when a scream—shrill and frightful—rang in my ears. I saw Graves turn to his bride and catch her in his arms.

When I came up she had collected her senses and was behaving splendidly. While Graves fetched a lantern and water she sat down on the porch, her back against the house, and undid her garter, so that I could pull the stocking off her bitten foot. Her instep, into which Bo's venomous teeth had sunk, was already swollen and discolored. I slashed the teeth-marks this way and that with my lancet. And Mrs. Graves kept saying: "All right—all right—don't mind me—do what's best."

Don's leash had wedged between two of the porch planks,

and all the time we were working over Mrs. Graves he whined and struggled to get loose.

"Graves," I said, when we had done what we could, "if your wife begins to seem faint, give her brandy—just a very little—at a time—and—I think we were in time—and for God's sake don't ever let her know *why* she was bitten—or by *what*——"

Then I turned and freed Don and took off his leash.

The moonlight was now very white and brilliant. In the sandy path that led from Graves's porch I saw the print of feet—shaped just like human feet—less than an inch long. I made Don smell them, and said:

"Hunt close, boy! Hunt close!"

Thus hunting, we moved slowly through the grass toward the interior of the island. The scent grew hotter—suddenly Don began to move more stiffly—as if he had the rheumatism—his eyes straight ahead saw something that I could not see—the tip of his tail vibrated furiously—he sank lower and lower—his legs worked more and more stiffly—his head was thrust forward to the full stretch of his neck toward a thick clump of grass. In the act of taking a wary step he came to a dead halt—his right forepaw just clear of the ground. The tip of his tail stopped vibrating. The tail itself stood straight out behind him and became rigid like a bar of iron. I never saw a stancher point.

"Steady, boy!"

I pushed forward the safety of my shot-gun and stood at attention.

"How is she?"

"Seems to be pulling through. I heard you fire both barrels. What luck?"

THE MOLLMEIT¹ OF THE MOUNTAIN

BY CYNTHIA STOCKLEY

WHEN the number of colored pupils attending the Friend for Little Children school reached one hundred and fifty, it was decided that Aunt Joanna ought to have the assistance of a white teacher as well as the three half-caste young girls she had already trained. The high-Dutch ladies of Brandersburg who interested themselves in Aunt Joanna's good work determined to advertise in the Free State newspapers for a girl who would not only teach in the school, but also live with Aunt Joanna at the school cottage and help with the simple domestic arrangements. For Aunt Joanna kept no servant; she would have considered it extravagant to do so while she had health and strength. She was a good cook, could make her own soap, smoke her own legs of mutton, and grow her own vegetables. She had a neat little garden round the cottage (which stood some hundred and fifty yards from the school), and a corner of it was devoted to herbs; for she was deeply learned in the science of herbal healing, and could cure a headache, a varicose vein, a black eye, or supply you with a sleeping draught that would make you forget you had ever known neuralgia. Besides this, she managed with great skill and discipline the large school of colored boys and girls which she had started herself with half a dozen children some fifteen or sixteen years before; and yet found time to tend the sick, harass the lazy, and man-

¹ *Mollmeit* is Dutch for "madwoman" or "witch."

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age the affairs generally of every one in the native Location. However, though she would not admit it, she was beginning to look old and worn, and it was certainly a good idea to get some one to help her in her busy life.

The advertisement brought several answers, but none of them so satisfactory as that of a young Bloemhof girl called Mary Russel. The Brandersburg ladies thought well of her letter of application, and better still of Mary herself when she arrived, pretty and fresh and kind, with a firm mouth and a courageous glance in her gray eyes. No sooner was Mary Russel installed than she became a great favorite with the children, and the Brandersburg ladies, feeling that they had done well by so popular a character as Aunt Joanna, thereafter turned their attention to their own affairs.

The large and flourishing town of Brandersburg lay within the shadow of a mighty *berg* that in any other country would be called a mountain, and even in Africa was considered worthy of a title. Thaba Inkosisan, it was named, and, when the sun set, its great jagged shadow lay far-flung across the veldt, just missing Brandersburg, but falling full and black upon the native Location; and this was considered a curious and sinister thing by the colored population, for it was upon their village and in their hearts that the mountain had cast sorrow and fear.

The Friend for Little Children school stood close to the foot of the berg; and a road ran directly from it to the Location, so that the children could go to and fro between their homes and the school without approaching the Dutch town; and perhaps this was one of the reasons why Aunt Joanna's work was as popular with the whites as with the natives, for in the Free State the whites did not care for their children to mix with the natives, and any arrangement to keep the two races apart was greatly favored. But

the situation of the school was a cause of disquietude among the colored parents—not because it was too far from the town, but because it was too near the berg. For Thaba Inkosisan was haunted by a mollmeit, and a mollmeit is no friend to little children.

The haunting of the mountain dated from many years back, to the year when the Basutos fought in the Free State, surrounding many a town and putting it in a state of siege. Brandersburg had been among the beleaguered towns, and the inhabitants of several farms near by had been put to the *assegai* by the fierce Basuto warriors.

Now, on the other side of the mountain, about thirty miles from the town, there had stood a little stone farmhouse which an old Boer had built with an eye to defense in case of war. Its windows were small and high, its doors and shutters were of iron, and there was nothing inflammable anywhere in its outer structure. When the Boer died, the place was bought by an Englishman with a pretty wife and a little daughter. Just before the trouble with the Basutos, another woman came to supplement the little family—a certain Janet Fink, middle-aged, well educated, and recently come to Africa on an emigrant ship. She had been engaged by an agent at the Cape to come to the farm as nursery governess and “mother’s helper” combined.

Unfortunately, the English family was one of those cut off from the town. The Englishman had, indeed, been warned; but he pooh-poohed the idea of war, or heeded it only enough to postpone going in to the town to get the monthly supply of provisions. Eventually supplies ran so low that he was obliged, one day, to set forth, after giving careful instructions for the defense of the farm in case of attack. But he had delayed too long. On his way to the town he was met by Basutos out for killing, and put to the

assegai. A contingent of the main *impi* then went to the farmhouse and tried to take it; but the women had seen them coming, and received them so resolutely and with such well-aimed shots from the high windows that, having more important things on hand, they presently proceeded on their way, leaving two men behind, with instructions to watch the house and kill the women, if possible; if not, to starve them out. The Kaffirs were aware that, though there was water in the house, there was no meat or meal to speak of, and that the little garrison could not hold out for more than a few days.

It held out, however, for ten days, during which time smoke went up every morning from the chimney; and whenever the Basutos made a feint at approaching they were received with rifle fire. On the eleventh day there was no smoke, and toward evening the two Basutos, feeling pretty sure of their prey, crept close, meaning to try for an entry by the chimney. Within ten yards of the house, one of them was picked off with a bullet through the head; the other, though wounded, managed to crawl away into the bush, where, a day or two later, he was found by a troop of Dutch artillery. Under the lash of the *sjambok*, he was induced to tell all he knew about the farmhouse; and the Dutchmen, convinced at length that the place was not an ambush, rode up to it, and found, not what they expected, but many surprising things.

First of all, instead of signs of famine there was every evidence that meals had been eaten. The Boers were deeply puzzled until, in an adjoining room, they found the body of the farmer's wife, lying in a corner, covered with old sacks. She had been dead for many days, and the manner of her dying was swift and sudden; she had been stabbed in the back. When, later, the charred skull and thigh-bones

of a little child were raked out of the ashes in the fireplace, the dark tragedy was made clearer still, and the rough men turned from the scene with sick hearts and grim mouths. There were husbands and fathers among them, and it would have gone hard with her if, in that hour, they had come across the "mother's helper" who in so hideous a fashion had helped herself. But they never found her. Whether, after escaping from the house, she had been caught and killed by the Basutos, or whether she had reached some town, told a plausible tale, and been taken in and cared for, had never been discovered. Only, presently, in some strange way, a story got about that she had fled to Thaba Inkosisan, and was living there in a cave, subsisting on wild roots and rock-rabbits.

The tale first got credence, among others besides the natives, on the disappearance from some transport wagons, outspanned near the mountain, of a little Kaffir child. It was declared by the Kaffirs that the "flesh-eating woman" from the farm had turned into a mollmeit with cravings for human flesh, and that the children of Brandersburg would never be safe again while she lived in the mountain. Mollmeits, according to them, were like tigers that, having once tasted human blood, find no other so much to their liking; the evil craving comes upon them at times like a madness, and must be satisfied. Most of the Dutch people scoffed at this ghoulish tale, saying that it was more likely that the Kaffir child had fallen down a ravine, and thereafter been eaten by jackals. But some there were who believed in the mollmeit theory, and spoke of searching the mountain. However, the idea came to nothing. There are too many little pickaninnies in Africa for one more or less to make any difference except to its mother.

With the passing of months and years the legend of the

mollmeit had almost died out, when another child disappeared—a little orphan, this time, whom no one missed at first because it was no one's business to look after her. Thus several days passed before her loss was realized, and then it seemed rather late to make more than a perfunctory search: if she were lost in the bush, she was probably already dead from starvation or sunstroke. A search was made in a half-hearted sort of way, mainly because Aunt Joanna agitated for it; but no one bothered long about a little half-caste orphan child.

It was long before the mollmeit was heard of again. True, the superstitious and fearful tried to make out that little Anna Blaine, the youngest of a large colored family, had fallen a victim to the witch; but to all sensible people it was plain that the child had been drowned at the Sunday-school picnic. She was not missed until the children got home, and then it was remembered that when last seen she was throwing stones into the *spruit* near whose banks the picnic had been held. Aunt Joanna, with whom the child had been a great favorite, worried the police until they consented to drag the *spruit* for some six miles; but the body was never recovered.

The fourth-disappearance created more stir than any of the others. For one thing, it *was* the fourth; and when four children have mysteriously disappeared within the space of fourteen years it is time to be up and doing, said both the Dutch and colored population of Brandersburg. Further, it was no orphan or unwanted child this time, but Susie Brown, the pet child of a highly respectable colored carpenter. The child had started for school one morning, and simply never arrived. From the time she set out, an hour late, on the long, empty road that skirted the foot of the berg, no one had seen her. It was as though some great

asvogel had swooped down from the skies and carried her off. This time the mountain was searched from end to end by a large band of men. It is true that all the inner crevices could not be explored, nor the highest cliffs; but the searchers were satisfied that neither monstrous bird nor human monster occupied Thaba Inkosisan.

So again, with the passing of years, the weird legend died away, and at the time of Mary Russel's coming to the school it was almost forgotten, except by loving mothers who warned their children to keep as far away from the mountain as possible, and by the children themselves, who never wearied of embroidering and embellishing the fearsome tale, handing it on to one another, and sometimes frightening a timid child into a fit with it.

Mary, one day in the school-yard, came to a little group of girls who, having finished their tiffin, were seated in a ring, listening with scared eyes and parted lips to the story (with variations and improvements) of Susie Brown's disappearance.

"And the mollmeit chose her because she had such nice, fat arms and legs—just like Rosalie Paton's, there," announced the historian; and a chubby pale-brown maiden of five gave a howl of terror. Mary sat down and took the child in her arms, roundly scolding the story-teller, while she cuddled the soft, fuzzy head against her breast. Little Rosalie Paton's mother was a Cape woman, and a very disreputable one—the drunkard of the village, in fact; but it was probable that the child's father was a white man, for, except for the fuzziness of her long black hair and the brilliance of her great dark eyes, she was as like a pretty white child as she could be.

When Mary had thoroughly scolded the children for talking about the mollmeit, she carried the still weeping

Rosalie with her up to the cottage. A little petting soon dispersed the tears, and then Mary produced her trinket-box and allowed the child to look at its contents. There was a necklace of jagged red corals that Rosalie gurgled over so joyously that Mary, after a moment's hesitation, clasped it round the dusky little neck and told the child that she might wear it that night to the magic-lantern entertainment. For the autumn holidays were approaching, and Aunt Joanna was going to celebrate the break in the school term by giving one of her frequent little entertainments. In the midst of Rosalie's joyful caperings, the voice of Aunt Joanna was heard calling:

"Mary, Mary, where are you, my child? Isn't it time for the school bell?" And Mary jumped up guiltily just as Aunt Joanna appeared in the doorway, filling it with her plump, large presence. She was a short woman who, in spite of her great activity, could not keep down stoutness. Her large, round face was pallid with the dead pallor peculiar to people who have lived long in hot climates, but it was lighted by an unfailing smile of cheerfulness and sky-blue eyes. She wore a quaint garb of black alpaca, long and full, and confined by a cord at the waist; while on her head was an arrangement that resembled something between a coal-scuttle and a Turkish woman's *yashmak*. This uniform was her own invention, and, if it was a quaint and funny uniform, no one laughed, for Aunt Joanna was both liked and respected.

When Mary had told the tale of Rosalie's troubles, Aunt Joanna burst into her jolly laugh.

"The poor little thing! Was it afraid for its nice little fat brown body?" she said tenderly, and, taking Rosalie on her knee, rolled up the child's cotton sleeves, looking at the plump pale arms, and pinching the soft neck.

“Let me catch any old mollmeit trying to eat my Rosalie!” she said fondly. “Run along, Mary, and ring the bell. Get lessons over early. Tell the children I am letting them off an hour earlier, so that they may have time to curl their hair for to-night.” She laughed merrily at her own little jest, well knowing that hair-curling is an unnecessary item in a colored child’s toilet. She was always full of merry little jokes of this kind, and the natives, being a laughter-loving race, rejoiced in them as much as she did.

Mary hurried away, leaving Rosalie seated happily on the old woman’s knees, and did not see the child again until, during the afternoon, Aunt Joanna carried her into the school-room fast asleep.

“Oh, Auntie! How can you carry that great, fat thing? You’ll be tired out before to-night,” said Mary reproachfully, for she thought Aunt Joanna looked even paler than usual. And, sure enough, that night the old lady was too tired to eat any supper before starting for the entertainment. She looked as haggard as death, though her sky-blue eyes were brighter than ever and full of excitement; but the beautifully broiled mutton chop Mary had prepared, with potatoes baked in their skins, lay on her plate untouched. Mary, in all the months she had been at the cottage, had never known Aunt Joanna to want an excellent appetite, and she was troubled.

Down at the school, the children were buzzing like bees outside the closed door, while Aunt Joanna and the pupil-teachers within put the final touches to the magic-lantern arrangements. Mary fished Rosalie out of the crowd, and found that, though she was still wearing her torn school frock, she had been washed, her hair braided, and she was proudly sporting the coral necklace. She still seemed half asleep, but she blinked happily at Mary.

The entertainment was an enormous success. The magic lantern worked like magic indeed, and there were howls of regret when, at nine o'clock, the last slide was shown. Aunt Joanna made an announcement that during holiday week she should give another exhibition for the parents, and the children then danced and partook of a repast of buns and ginger beer. They were to go home at half-past nine punctually; but, before that time, Aunt Joanna, who was very tired, left Mary in charge and went home.

"I'll see the children safely off," Mary promised.

"Oh, the children will be all right," said Aunt Joanna. "It's my lantern and slides I'm thinking about. Pack them safely and put them away in the cupboard, Mary, or, sure enough, those rascallions who come to clean up in the morning will be fiddling with it and break something."

Mary promised not to leave until everything was locked up safely and all the lights put out.

"You needn't worry about anything, Auntie. Just get to bed and have a good rest."

Yet when, about an hour later, she came up the slope to the cottage, she saw by the faint red and purple gleams shining from one of the windows that Aunt Joanna was still at prayer. She felt vexed to think that the old soul was praying instead of sleeping, but she knew better than to disturb her, and, being very tired herself, was not long in getting to bed. She fell asleep thinking happily of the coming week of holiday, which she was to spend with her family at Bloemhof.

During the night she was much disturbed by the howling of her dog Fingo, who was fastened in the yard. She had been allowed to bring Fingo from Bloemhof, and he had always slept in the kitchen and been allowed the run of the house; but that very afternoon Aunt Joanna had accused him of rooting in the garden, and insisted on his being kept

tied up in future. Whether it was the curtailing of his freedom that desolated Fingo it is hard to say, but certainly Mary had never before heard him make such tragic and doleful sounds. At last he left off, and she got to sleep; but it seemed only a moment later that she was awakened by a loud thumping on the front door, and, sleepily putting out her hand for the matches, realized that the light of early dawn was already in the room. Jumping out of the bed, she threw a cloak over her nightdress and went to open the door. As she passed through the dining-room she heard Aunt Joanna also hurrying out of bed.

"Some one must be ill, Mary," she called through her door; and, as if in answer, came another loud knocking and a voice crying, in bitter trouble:

"Aunt Joanna! Oh, Aunt Joanna!"

"What, my poor thing? What?" called back the old woman, and came floundering, half dressed, from her room as Mary opened the door.

A colored woman was standing there, haggard and dishevelled, her hair hanging in strings about her wild face, fear in her bloodshot eyes. Her clothes were rumpled as if they had been slept in, and she was panting and covered with dust—a picture of misery.

"Is my little Rosalie here?" she gasped—and with the question came a sickening odor of stale brandy. It was then they recognized her for Rosalie Paton's mother.

"Here! Why, of course not, Mrs. Paton," said Mary.

"What do you mean?" said Aunt Joanna, in astonishment.

"*Then the mollmeit's got her!*" wailed the woman distractedly. "*The mollmeit's got my child!*"

"But what do you mean?" repeated Aunt Joanna in a sterner voice, for she saw that the woman was on the verge

of hysteria. "Rosalie went home with all the other children last night. Do you mean to say they didn't bring her to you?"

"No!" said the woman—and in her voice was a dreadful despair. "God forgive me, I was drunk—and asleep. It was not till this morning that I knew she hadn't been home—at least, she wasn't in the house. Since then I've been to a dozen houses, and no one knows anything; but some of the children say that on their way home they were frightened by something that jumped out from behind a rock down there where the berg comes near the road——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" broke in Aunt Joanna scornfully. "Listening to children's tales! You just go back to the village, Sarah Paton, and look for your child. She's there right enough; some one has kept her for the night, knowing the state you were in. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, my woman. Be off now and find her, and when you have found her come straight back here and tell me, and see if you can turn over a new leaf after this."

Thus with good-natured scoldings she waved the more than half-comforted woman from the door.

"Get back to your bed, Mary, child, and sleep a little longer. It's not five o'clock yet, and we've earned a little lie-abed after the tiring day yesterday. That child's all right—safely tucked up in some kind soul's bed, you may be sure. It will be a lesson to that good-for-nothing hussy."

But Mary, though she went back to bed, was too disturbed to sleep. She was haunted by the fear of harm having come to little Rosalie, and she could not rid herself of foreboding. Why had she not gone down the road herself with the children? She had, indeed, watched them for a while from the school door, and had adjured the elders to take the hands of the little ones and see them all safely to their

doors. But well she knew the careless, irresponsible nature of the colored race! No doubt the little ones had soon been allowed to lag behind. Even so, what harm *could* befall them on that straight road not three quarters of a mile long? Of course the talk of a mollmeit was silly, and yet—and yet— Oh, it was no use staying in bed worrying and fretting. She jumped out, and busied herself getting breakfast. By the time it was ready, Aunt Joanna also was dressed, and together, according to custom, they went into a room that was fitted as a sort of little chapel and said their prayers before the altar. Although Aunt Joanna was extremely devout, no one had ever found out to what creed she subscribed. She was believed to be a trifle unorthodox. But her unselfish and charitable life disarmed the critics who found some of her practices rather eccentric. She was in the habit of retiring to pray constantly, and at morning and evening Mary always joined her.

It was a nice little room, the floor covered with a soft, hand-made rug of red and brown woolen scraps, like little autumn leaves, sewn one above the other; several chairs with kneeling-stools before them; and an altar-table that no one would have guessed was made of rough packing-case wood, for it was hidden by a fine scarlet cloth and linen embroidered by the school children, and there were flowers and candles upon it. The many small panes of the one window had been glorified by means of scarlet and purple tissue paper, which, cut in sheets and pasted on alternate panes, made an excellent substitute for stained glass; and when the sun shone through and fell in a flood of color upon the patchwork rug, Mary felt a subtle pleasure woven among her prayers. Under the window a large dark oaken chest lent a further air of ecclesiasticism to the little room. It was worm-eaten

and full of cracks and holes; but it was reputed to have been part of the furniture of a church, and Aunt Joanna loved it.

As the two arose from their knees the sound of voices broke in upon them, followed by a knocking on the door. Once more Sarah Paton stood without; but now several women were with her, and a scattering of children with scared faces and eyes ready to jump out of their heads. There was ill news to tell. Rosalie was not to be found, in the village or out of it. No one had seen her since last night, when some of the elder children remembered calling out to her to "come on," as she loitered sleepily behind. Other, smaller children averred that, as they were capering along in the rear, "something white" had darted out from behind a rock and "made noises like a mollmeit." They were quite unable to describe the noises, but declared that they had all run screaming down the road. Evidently, in the pleasurable excitement of this adventure, sleepily lagging Rosalie had been forgotten; and no one thought of her again until, with the morning, came the weeping mother.

"And, I tell you, the mollmeit's got her!" shrieked the unhappy woman once more, while the others gazed apprehensively at Aunt Joanna.

"How long is that witch going to be left up in the mountain?" they muttered. "You must write to the government, Aunt Joanna. None of our children are safe——"

Aunt Joanna did not conceal her impatience with them.

"It is all nonsense and silly superstition," she said. "The child will be found all right. I'll find her." And she pulled Sarah Paton indoors, and made her eat the breakfast Mary had prepared, scolding, comforting, and lecturing the poor woman at the same time. She herself ate nothing, so anxious was she to be off and start the search.

"Lock up, Mary," she said briskly, "and come along.

I'll find the little *schelm*, see if I don't, and give her a good shaking for causing all this trouble."

However, a thorough search of every nook and corner of the village and inquiry at every house elicited no result, and at the end of the morning Aunt Joanna began to look as blank as the muttering women, and much more weary. There was no question of school; the children were given a holiday and told to join in the search. The Dutch police were then communicated with, and the afternoon was spent in going through Brandersburg. Aunt Joanna was on her feet all day, but at five o'clock Mary persuaded her to return home, begging her to eat something and go straight to bed. Mary herself stayed on in the Location, wandering about, questioning, and trying to comfort Sarah Paton with words of hope that had no response in her own breast.

It was sundown before she reached home, tired and dispirited; and it was just as well that she had accepted a cup of tea in the village, for of course Aunt Joanna had been too tired to prepare a meal, and there was not even a fire in the kitchen. However, Mary found a cup with the remains of some herbal brew that Aunt Joanna had evidently been making for herself, and a moment later she herself appeared. Fresh hope and courage, gained perhaps in prayer, showed in her face; for, though still pale, she looked extraordinarily excited, and her blue eyes gleamed with some inner fire that Mary's news could not quench.

"We shall find her—we shall find her, never fear," she prophesied. But Mary went to bed cold and miserable. The doleful howling of Fingo throughout the night depressed her and drove away all hope of sleep. In the morning Aunt Joanna decreed that Fingo must return to Bloemhof.

"I can quite understand your fondness for him, Mary—he's a dear little dog; but we can't be kept awake like this

night after night. You must take him back with you tomorrow. By the way, I've made arrangements for Tom Jackson to call for you."

"But, Auntie, I don't want to go. I feel I can't, unless Rosalie is found."

"Nonsense, my dear! What good can you do? If she is to be found, I'll find her. If you miss Jackson's cart, you miss your holiday, and I'm not going to have that." There was resolution in the old woman's voice, and Mary made no further remark, only ate her breakfast and hurried off to school—for work had to go on, whatever befell. It was the last day before the holidays, and should have been a bright and merry one, but gloom hung over every one. The children spoke in hushed voices, and at tiffin-time, instead of playing, sat in groups, whispering.

During the afternoon school session Mary had an attack of neuralgia, which became so acute that she determined to go to the cottage for something to relieve it; and, having set her class a task, she put the eldest pupil-teacher in charge, and slipped away. She took a short cut to the cottage over a broken-down place in the school-yard wall, through the cottage garden, and in by the kitchen door, which stood open. Fingo whined as she passed, but she took no notice, being intent on the matter of relieving her pain. Gaining her room, she took a bottle from a shelf, and began to apply the medicament to her gums with the tip of her finger. At the same moment she heard Aunt Joanna going through the kitchen to the back door, and was on the point of getting up and making her presence known, when the sound of Aunt Joanna's voice, speaking to Fingo, arrested her:

"What are *you* sniveling about, you dirty cur?"

Mary could hardly believe her ears. Not only the coarse

words astonished her, but the indescribably vicious way in which they were spoken, and the harsh voice, so utterly unlike the genial tones she knew so well. The girl sat on her bed as if she had been glued there, and heard the rest of the sentence:

“I’ve a good mind to settle your hash for you; only——” The threat remained unfinished. The speaker had turned back into the kitchen and was moving about. Presently she went in to pray, and shut the door. Mary was meditating a stealthy flight,—for, without examining her reasons, she was suddenly averse to letting Aunt Joanna know she had heard the words addressed to Fingo,—when the door was opened again and Aunt Joanna came back into the kitchen. She seemed to be busy at the drawer of the dresser, and next came the sound of a knife being sharpened on the doorstep. Afterward there was a dead silence for two or three minutes. Then, in a curiously fierce whisper, some words: “No . . . no . . . I mustn’t . . . No! I must wait till to-morrow.”

A loud rap on the front door broke the sinister spell. Aunt Joanna, dropping something on the kitchen table, left the kitchen, and Mary crept out and made her escape through the back door. As she passed through the kitchen she saw the carving-knife, with a fresh edge to it, lying upon the table.

When school was over at last, and the children gone, there was still much to be done, and it was dusk before Mary approached the house again, walking slowly, for she felt a strange reluctance to meet Aunt Joanna. But the house was empty. Aunt Joanna had not returned from her sick visit. Mary made the fire and put on the kettle for a cup of tea, then turned her attention to the matter of supper. Since Sarah Paton had first knocked on the door, no regular meal had been prepared in the cottage; and, after she had visited

the larder, Mary's simple calculations told her that, if she had eaten little during the two troubled days, Aunt Joanna had eaten absolutely nothing. Apparently, another cup of herbal tea had been brewed and drunk; for the empty cup, giving out a faint, peculiarly bitter odor, was on the table. Herbal tea, however, is a poor sustenance, and it behooved Mary to see about getting a good meal ready. As she sat peeling potatoes, her mind wrestled persistently with the problem of little Rosalie, and when she had finished she determined to go and pray. She had often prayed for things, as the young do, with fervor and faith, and her prayers had sometimes been answered in a wonderful way. The thought of going to God now, in the quiet house, appealed to her. She stepped softly into the little chapel room, and, kneeling down, not in her usual place but right before the altar, she prayed with all her heart that Rosalie might be found. When she finished, the tears were streaming down her cheeks, so ardently and pleadingly, like a child in trouble, had she called upon God. Immediately her heart was lighter, her courage higher. It was as if she had passed a burden from her own into other, abler hands.

As she rose she felt a brittle, crunching sensation under her boot, and, stooping, picked out something from under the red and brown leaves of the rug, and a thrill of amazement suddenly ran through her. The chapel was by now so dark that she could only dimly see what it was she had found, but not for a moment did she mistake the familiar feel of a thing she had possessed nearly all her life. It was her own little coral necklace—the necklace Rosalie was wearing when she disappeared.

No sound broke from the girl's lips, but a cry went up from her heart at this strange answer to her prayer. She realized that, if she had not gone to the altar steps to pray,

her foot would never have found the necklace. Bewildered, amazed, frightened as she was, she suddenly felt strong and secure. God was at work!

As she opened the door that led back into the kitchen, lighted only by the flickering firelight, she collided heavily with some one, and her arm was gripped as by a hand of iron.

“What were you doing in there?”

Aunt Joanna, breathing very heavily, as if she had been running, barked the question hoarsely at her. Mary stared a moment, a sort of terror creeping over her at that harsh, brutal voice heard twice the same day. Some swift instinct warned her to conceal what she felt.

“I have been praying, Aunt,” she answered quietly. “Praying that our little Rosalie may be found.”

Slowly the grip on her arm relaxed, and, as if nothing untoward had happened, she moved across to the kitchen fire and lifted a saucepan. “I’m afraid my stew is burning!”

She had spoken to hide something. A terrible inspiration had come to her that she must not share with Aunt Joanna the discovery she had just made; and, as she shook the saucepan with one hand, with the other she slipped the necklace into her pocket. Then she lighted the kitchen lamp, and got out the teapot.

“I’m just going to make you a cup of tea, Auntie,” she said cheerfully; “I expect you are dead beat.”

The old woman had sunk into a chair by the table; but her eyes had a strange glare in them as she watched Mary, who bustled about, rattling the tea-things. At last the tea was made and poured out.

“And now tell me, Auntie dear, is there any news yet?”

Aunt Joanna gave a sigh as if some tight band around

her had suddenly been loosened and she had breathing-space once more.

“No, child”—and it was almost her old genial voice. “The men have come back from the bush. But to-morrow they are going up the mountain. I’ve worked them up to *that*.”

“I’m glad,” said Mary thoughtfully. “For do you know, Auntie, I am beginning to believe, as the children do, that there really *is* a mollmeit up there, and that she is at the bottom of all the disappearances.”

The blue eyes fastened themselves keenly on the girl’s face; then, “I have always believed it myself,” said Aunt Joanna solemnly.

The Irish stew looked appetizing enough in its dish; but the sight of it had a curious effect on Aunt Joanna. She looked at it almost ravenously, then turned away as if the sight sickened her.

“No—no, I couldn’t eat any,” she muttered, half to herself.

Mary’s own appetite had taken wings since that curious scene in the kitchen. Nevertheless she made a great pretense of hunger. Presently Aunt Joanna rose and stumbled toward her room, which was next to the dining-room. It was easy to see that she was dropping with fatigue. How could it be otherwise after two days of ceaseless activity during which she had eaten nothing? Her heavy, pallid cheeks hung in haggard rolls about her jaws, and, with the glare gone out of them, her eyes resembled two large blue beads in a fat doll’s face.

“I’ll go to bed, Mary,” she said heavily. “I must get rest.”

“Yes, do, Auntie. No evening prayers to-night, I suppose?”

Like a flash, energy came back into the old woman’s glance and the haggard muscles of her face seemed to

tighten; but Mary, though her heart had come bounding up into her throat, ate on placidly.

“No,” said Aunt Joanna slowly; “I shall say my prayers in my room. And I advise you, my dear, to get to bed as soon as possible, for Jackson will be here for you at five in the morning. Have you got your things ready?”

“Not yet,” said Mary, and secretly repeated to herself—“*not yet!*” She was dazed, bewildered, and terrified. Creeping, creeping terror of she knew not what was in her veins. But not for nothing had she prayed, and felt answering faith and courage poured into her heart! Definitely she knew that after that prayer and its answer she had no right to go yet—until Rosalie was found.

Though she could not eat, she sat for some little time at the table, making sounds with her knife and fork. Her idea was to prolong the evening as much as possible. She did not wish to go to bed until Aunt Joanna slept. She could hear her undressing, and presently murmuring to herself; later the iron bed creaked. But sleep was as yet far from that bed. Long before Mary had observed in Aunt Joanna an intense, almost foxlike acuteness that, in one less kind and genial, would have alarmed the girl. Now it did alarm her; for from the silent bedroom, through the closed door, she felt it directed upon her. Those unfortunate last words about evening prayers had aroused it!

At last, Mary rose and quietly cleared the table, went out to the yard and fed Fingo, made one or two little preparations for the morning, then bolted the back door and retired to her room. With her door carefully ajar, as she often left it, she then began to shake out and fold up her holiday things and pack them in a bag. In all she did she was careful to be perfectly natural, and to make no sound more or less than she would on any ordinary night;

for she was still aware of that acute attention piercing through the very walls about her. At last she washed her face, brushed and plaited her hair, and got into bed. But under her night-dress she was fully dressed.

There in the darkness she lay thinking, thinking, and while she thought she practiced breathing regularly and evenly, as she had often done when a child. What was the meaning of it all?—the strange words in the kitchen . . . the abuse flung at the dog . . . the screeching knife . . . the grip on her arm . . . the watching eyes . . . the coral necklace in the little chapel? Mary had no clear idea; only, when she tried to piece the strange puzzle together, she was afraid with a deadly fear that froze the blood in her veins and paralyzed her heart.

It seemed as if years instead of hours passed before that happened which she had known must happen. Very gently, Aunt Joanna's door opened, and feet came padding softly to the kitchen. Beside Mary's door they paused—it was for this moment Mary had practiced her regular breathing, and the practice stood her in good stead. After some frightful moments—the longest, it seemed to Mary, she had ever lived through—the stealthy feet crossed the kitchen, and the chapel door was opened. It was then that Mary sat up in bed, straining her ear-drums until she thought they would crack. But the only sound that reached her was a little soft, creaking sound. A moment later she was lying flat again, breathing regularly; for the feet were returning, to pause by her door, and the light of a candle flickered in. At last, the gentle opening and shutting of another door, and the creak of the iron bed under a heavy body, told that Aunt Joanna had finished her midnight prowlings. It was Mary's turn to get up.

For a full hour she stood listening in the darkness, and

in the end she heard the stertorous breathing of a stout, tired woman fallen heavily asleep. This time it was Mary who stole, candle in hand, to the chapel. Drops of cold sweat stood on her forehead and round her mouth as, without a sound, she opened the door of that silent room to seek there that which Aunt Joanna had hidden and feared for another to find. Whatever and wherever it was, there was no time to lose. At any moment the old woman might wake. Fearfully the girl stole to the altar, and, lifting the heavy red cloth, stared beneath. Nothing!

The only other possible place was the oak chest. With faltering hands she lifted the lid (which gave a little creak) and looked in, and at what she saw the candle all but fell from her hands. White and still upon the folded altar cloths lay the body of little Rosalie. Mary turned faint and sick; but the Power that had sustained her throughout the terrible night did not fail her in that moment. She put out her hand to touch the child, and at the same moment a faint, bitter odor of herbs came to her, and she recognized it as the same she had smelled in the cup in the kitchen. There was a brown stain on the child's lips, and drops of liquid on her dress.

Like a flash Mary realized the truth, and, touching the little hands, found them still warm. The child was not dead, but under the influence of a sleeping herb. Plenty of air came through the holes and cracks of the old chest. She was being kept asleep until . . . until what?

The sinister words muttered in the kitchen came back to memory:

"No, no, I mustn't . . . I mustn't! . . . I must wait till to-morrow!"

Until to-morrow—when Mary would be gone. Was that it? Then, in the silent house, what?

Ah, what terrible thoughts! They almost unnerved Mary. But she found strength to catch up the child's still form, and, turning, fled from the accursed place. The lid of the chest fell with a loud bang, and as she gained the back door and fumbled with the latch she heard Aunt Joanna leap like a tiger from her lair.

Ah, what a race was that through the black night! Over garden beds to the gate mercifully open, and down the long, lonely road. Far, far in front lay the native village, and a single point of light glimmering out from a sick woman's hut; and behind was a wild beast balked of its prey, snarling and panting.

Mary ran until a glaze came over her eyes and the blood burst from her nostrils. The rush of the air woke the child in her arms to weak but piercing crying, and only then did the padding, shambling feet behind begin to falter and fall back. But Mary ran staggering on toward the light burning in Sarah Paton's hut, and only stopped to fall fainting on the doorstep.

Within half an hour the tale was told, and men, with lanterns in their hands and black fury in their hearts, were out on the road. But they found no one. Both the school and the cottage were empty.

The mollmeit had fled to the mountain at last.

Sewn into the mattress of Aunt Joanna's bed were discovered the emigration papers of Janet Fink; and later, from under the bed of herbs in the garden, aided and guided by good dog Fingo, men dug out the skulls and bones of four little children. Then, raging, they burned the cottage and school of the Friend for Little Children, and, with brands from the fire, set alight the thick bush of the mountain. For four days the flames roared and

crackled, sending down great gusts of heat to the town below, and by night lighting up the veldt for miles. The rock-rabbits and mountain buck came scudding down to the safety of the bush, but the men deployed in a wide circle round the base of the berg never raised a gun to them, so intent were they on their grim vigil.

At length the flames died down, and Thaba Inkosisan, blackened and bare, with no leaf or flower or branch, nor any living thing left upon it, gloomed silent above the town.

FISHHEAD

BY IRVIN S. COBB

It goes past the powers of my pen to try to describe Reelfoot Lake for you so that you, reading this, will get the picture of it in your mind as I have it in mine. For Reelfoot Lake is like no other lake that I know anything about. It is an afterthought of Creation.

The rest of this continent was made and had dried in the sun for thousands of years—for millions of years for all I know—before Reelfoot came to be. It's the newest big thing in nature on this hemisphere probably, for it was formed by the great earthquake of 1811, just a little more than a hundred years ago. That earthquake of 1811 surely altered the face of the earth on the then far frontier of this country. It changed the course of rivers, it converted hills into what are now the sunk lands of three states, and it turned the solid ground to jelly and made it roll in waves like the sea. And in the midst of the retching of the land and the vomiting of the waters it depressed to varying depths a section of the earth crust sixty miles long, taking it down—trees, hills, hollows and all; and a crack broke through the Mississippi River so that for three days the river ran up stream, filling the hole.

The result was the largest lake south of the Ohio, lying mostly in Tennessee, but extending up across what is now the Kentucky line, and taking its name from a fancied

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resemblance in its outline to the splay, reeled foot of a cornfield negro. Niggerwool Swamp, not so far away, may have got its name from the same man who christened Reelfoot; at least so it sounds.

Reelfoot is, and has always been, a lake of mystery. In places it is bottomless. Other places the skeletons of the cypress trees that went down when the earth sank still stand upright, so that if the sun shines from the right quarter and the water is less muddy than common, a man peering face downward into its depths sees, or thinks he sees, down below him the bare top-limbs upstretching like drowned men's fingers, all coated with the mud of years and bandaged with pennons of the green lake slime. In still other places the lake is shallow for long stretches, no deeper than breast deep to a man, but dangerous because of the weed growths and the sunken drifts which entangle a swimmer's limbs. Its banks are mainly mud, its waters are muddied too, being a rich coffee color in the spring and a copperish yellow in the summer, and the trees along its shore are mud colored clear up to their lower limbs after the spring floods, when the dried sediment covers their trunks with a thick, scrofulous-looking coat.

There are stretches of unbroken woodland around it and slashes where the cypress trees rise countlessly like headstones and footstones for the dead snags that rot in the soft ooze. There are deadenings with the lowland corn growing high and rank below and the bleached, fire-blackened girdled trees rising above, barren of leaf and limb. There are long, dismal flats where in the spring the clotted frog-spawn clings like patches of white mucus among the weed stalks and at night the turtles crawl out to lay clutches of perfectly round, white eggs with tough, rubbery shells in the sand. There are bayous leading off to no-

where and sloughs that wind aimlessly, like great, blind worms, to finally join the big river that rolls its semi-liquid torrents a few miles to the westward.

So Reelfoot lies there, flat in the bottoms, freezing lightly in the winter, steaming torridly in the summer, swollen in the spring when the woods have turned a vivid green and the buffalo gnats by the million and the billion fill the flooded hollows with their pestilential buzzing, and in the fall ringed about gloriously with all the colors which the first frost brings—gold of hickory, yellow-russet of sycamore, red of dogwood and ash and purple-black of sweet-gum.

But the Reelfoot country has its uses. It is the best game and fish country, natural or artificial, that is left in the South to-day. In their appointed seasons the duck and the geese flock in, and even semi-tropical birds, like the brown pelican and the Florida snake-bird, having been known to come there to nest. Pigs, gone back to wildness, range the ridges, each razor-backed drove captained by a gaunt, savage, slab-sided old boar. By night the bull frogs, inconceivably big and tremendously vocal, bellow under the banks.

It is a wonderful place for fish—bass and crappie and perch and the snouted buffalo fish. How these edible sorts live to spawn and how their spawn in turn live to spawn again is a marvel, seeing how many of the big fish-eating cannibal fish there are in Reelfoot. Here, bigger than anywhere else, you find the garfish, all bones and appetite and horny plates, with a snout like an alligator, the nearest link, naturalists say, between the animal life of to-day and the animal life of the Reptilian Period. The shovel-nose cat, really a deformed kind of freshwater sturgeon, with a great fan-shaped membranous plate jutting out from his

nose like a bowsprit, jumps all day in the quiet places with mighty splashing sounds, as though a horse had fallen into the water. On every stranded log the huge snapping turtles lie on sunny days in groups of four and six, baking their shells black in the sun, with their little snaky heads raised watchfully, ready to slip noiselessly off at the first sound of oars grating in the row-locks.

But the biggest of them all are the catfish. These are monstrous creatures, these catfish of Reelfoot—scaleless, slick things, with corpsy, dead eyes and poisonous fins like javelins and long whiskers dangling from the sides of their cavernous heads. Six and seven feet long they grow to be and to weigh two hundred pounds or more, and they have mouths wide enough to take in a man's foot or a man's fist and strong enough to break any hook save the strongest and greedy enough to eat anything, living or dead or putrid, that the horny jaws can master. Oh, but they are wicked things, and they tell wicked tales of them down there. They call them man-eaters and compare them, in certain of their habits, to sharks.

Fishhead was of a piece with this setting. He fitted into it as an acorn fits its cup. All his life he had lived on Reelfoot, always in the one place, at the mouth of a certain slough. He had been born there, of a negro father and a half-breed Indian mother, both of them now dead, and the story was that before his birth his mother was frightened by one of the big fish, so that the child came into the world most hideously marked. Anyhow, Fishhead was a human monstrosity, the veritable embodiment of nightmare. He had the body of a man—a short, stocky, sinewy body—but his face was as near to being the face of a great fish as any face could be and yet retain some trace of human aspect. His skull sloped back so abruptly that he could

hardly be said to have a forehead at all; his chin slanted off right into nothing. His eyes were small and round with shallow, glazed, pale-yellow pupils, and they were set wide apart in his head and they were unwinking and staring, like a fish's eyes. His nose was no more than a pair of tiny slits in the middle of the yellow mask. His mouth was the worst of all. It was the awful mouth of a catfish, lipless and almost inconceivably wide, stretching from side to side. Also when Fishhead became a man grown his likeness to a fish increased, for the hair upon his face grew out into two tightly kinked, slender pendants that drooped down either side of the mouth like the beards of a fish.

If he had any other name than Fishhead, none excepting he knew it. As Fishhead he was known and as Fishhead he answered. Because he knew the waters and the woods of Reelfoot better than any other man there, he was valued as a guide by the city men who came every year to hunt or fish; but there were few such jobs that Fishhead would take. Mainly he kept to himself, tending his corn patch, netting the lake, trapping a little and in season pot hunting for the city markets. His neighbors, ague-bitten whites and malaria-proof negroes alike, left him to himself. Indeed, for the most part they had a superstitious fear of him. So he lived alone, with no kith nor kin, nor even a friend, shunning his kind and shunned by them.

His cabin stood just below the state line, where Mud Slough runs into the lake. It was a shack of logs, the only human habitation for four miles up or down. Behind it the thick timber came shouldering right up to the edge of Fishhead's small truck patch, enclosing it in thick shade except when the sun stood just overhead. He cooked his food in a primitive fashion, outdoors, over a hole in the soggy earth or upon the rusted red ruin of an old cook stove,

and he drank the saffron water of the lake out of a dipper made of a gourd, faring and fending for himself, a master hand at skiff and net, competent with duck gun and fish spear, yet a creature of affliction and loneliness, part savage, almost amphibious, set apart from his fellows, silent and suspicious.

In front of his cabin jutted out a long fallen cottonwood trunk, lying half in and half out of the water, its top side burnt by the sun and worn by the friction of Fishhead's bare feet until it showed countless patterns of tiny scrolled lines, its under side black and rotted and lapped at unceasingly by little waves like tiny licking tongues. Its farther end reached deep water. And it was a part of Fishhead, for no matter how far his fishing and trapping might take him in the daytime, sunset would find him back there, his boat drawn up on the bank and he on the outer end of this log. From a distance men had seen him there many times, sometimes squatted, motionless as the big turtles that would crawl upon its dipping tip in his absence, sometimes erect and vigilant like a creek crane, his misshapen yellow form outlined against the yellow sun, the yellow water, the yellow banks—all of them yellow together.

If the Reelfooters shunned Fishhead by day they feared him by night and avoided him as a plague, dreading even the chance of a casual meeting. For there were ugly stories about Fishhead—stories which all the negroes and some of the whites believed. They said that a cry which had been heard just before dusk and just after, skittering across the darkened waters, was his calling cry to the big cats, and at his bidding they came trooping in, and that in their company he swam in the lake on moonlight nights, sporting with them, diving with them, even feeding with them on what manner of unclean things they fed. The cry

had been heard many times, that much was certain, and it was certain also that the big fish were noticeably thick at the mouth of Fishhead's slough. No native Reelfooter, white or black, would willingly wet a leg or an arm there.

Here Fishhead had lived and here he was going to die. The Baxters were going to kill him, and this day in mid-summer was to be the time of the killing. The two Baxters—Jake and Joel—were coming in their dugout to do it. This murder had been a long time in the making. The Baxters had to brew their hate over a slow fire for months before it reached the pitch of action. They were poor whites, poor in everything—repute and worldly goods and standing—a pair of fever-ridden squatters who lived on whisky and tobacco when they could get it, and on fish and cornbread when they couldn't.

The feud itself was of months' standing. Meeting Fishhead one day in the spring on the spindly scaffolding of the skiff landing at Walnut Log, and being themselves far overtaken in liquor and vainglorious with a bogus alcoholic substitute for courage, the brothers had accused him, wantonly and without proof, of running their trot-line and stripping it of the hooked catch—an unforgivable sin among the water dwellers and the shanty boaters of the South. Seeing that he bore this accusation in silence, only eyeing them steadfastly, they had been emboldened then to slap his face, whereupon he turned and gave them both the beating of their lives—bloodying their noses and bruising their lips with hard blows against their front teeth, and finally leaving them, mauled and prone, in the dirt. Moreover, in the onlookers a sense of the everlasting fitness of things had triumphed over race prejudice and allowed them—two freeborn, sovereign whites—to be licked by a nigger.

Therefore, they were going to get the nigger. The whole thing had been planned out amply. They were going to kill him on his log at sundown. There would be no witnesses to see it, no retribution to follow after it. The very ease of the undertaking made them forget even their inborn fear of the place of Fishhead's habitation.

For more than an hour now they had been coming from their shack across a deeply indented arm of the lake. Their dugout, fashioned by fire and adz and draw-knife from the bole of a gum tree, moved through the water as noiselessly as a swimming mallard, leaving behind it a long, wavy trail on the stilled waters. Jake, the better oarsman, sat flat in the stern of the round-bottomed craft, paddling with quick, splashless strokes. Joel, the better shot, was squatted forward. There was a heavy, rusted duck gun between his knees.

Though their spying upon the victim had made them certain sure he would not be about the shore for hours, a doubled sense of caution led them to hug closely the weedy banks. They slid along the shore like shadows, moving so swiftly and in such silence that the watchful mud turtles barely turned their snaky heads as they passed. So, a full hour before the time, they came slipping around the mouth of the slough and made for a natural ambushade which the mixed breed had left within a stone's jerk of his cabin to his own undoing.

Where the slough's flow joined deeper water a partly uprooted tree was stretched, prone from shore, at the top still thick and green with leaves that drew nourishment from the earth in which the half-uncovered roots yet held, and twined about with an exuberance of trumpet vines and wild fox-grapes. All about was a huddle of drift—last year's cornstalks, shreddy strips of bark, chunks of rotted

weed, all the ruffle and dunnage of a quiet eddy. Straight into this green clump glided the dugout and swung, broadside on, against the protecting trunk of the tree, hidden from the inner side by the intervening curtains of rank growth, just as the Baxters had intended it should be hidden, when days before in their scouting they marked this masked place of waiting and included it, then and there, in the scope of their plans.

There had been no hitch or mishap. No one had been abroad in the late afternoon to mark their movements—and in a little while Fishhead ought to be due. Jake's woodman's eye followed the downward swing of the sun speculatively. The shadows, thrown shoreward, lengthened and slithered on the small ripples. The small noises of the day died out; the small noises of the coming night began to multiply. The green-bodied flies went away and big mosquitoes, with speckled gray legs, came to take the places of the flies. The sleepy lake sucked at the mud banks with small mouthing sounds as though it found the taste of the raw mud agreeable. A monster crawfish, big as a chicken lobster, crawled out of the top of his dried mud chimney and perched himself there, an armored sentinel on the watchtower. Bull bats began to flutter back and forth above the tops of the trees. A pudgy muskrat, swimming with head up, was moved to sidle off briskly as he met a cottonmouth moccasin snake, so fat and swollen with summer poison that it looked almost like a legless lizard as it moved along the surface of the water in a series of slow torpid s's. Directly above the head of either of the waiting assassins a compact little swarm of midges hung, holding to a sort of kite-shaped formation.

A little more time passed and Fishhead came out of the woods at the back, walking swiftly, with a sack over his

shoulder. For a few seconds his deformities showed in the clearing, then the black inside of the cabin swallowed him up. By now the sun was almost down. Only the red nub of it showed above the timber line across the lake, and the shadows lay inland a long way. Out beyond, the big cats were stirring, and the great smacking sounds as their twisting bodies leaped clear and fell back in the water came shoreward in a chorus.

But the two brothers in their green covert gave heed to nothing except the one thing upon which their hearts were set and their nerves tensed. Joel gently shoved his gun-barrels across the log, cuddling the stock to his shoulder and slipping two fingers caressingly back and forth upon the triggers. Jake held the narrow dugout steady by a grip upon a fox-grape tendril.

A little wait and then the finish came. Fishhead emerged from the cabin door and came down the narrow footpath to the water and out upon the water on his log. He was barefooted and bareheaded, his cotton shirt open down the front to show his yellow neck and breast, his dungaree trousers held about his waist by a twisted tow string. His broad splay feet, with the prehensile toes outspread, gripped the polished curve of the log as he moved along its swaying, dipping surface until he came to its outer end and stood there erect, his chest filling, his chinless face lifted up and something of mastership and dominion in his poise. And then—his eye caught what another's eyes might have missed—the round, twin ends of the gun barrels, the fixed gleams of Joel's eyes, aimed at him through the green tracery.

In that swift passage of time, too swift almost to be measured by seconds, realization flashed all through him, and he threw his head still higher and opened wide his

shapeless trap of a mouth, and out across the lake he sent skittering and rolling his cry. And in his cry was the laugh of a loon, and the croaking bellow of a frog, and the bay of a hound, all the compounded night noises of the lake. And in it, too, was a farewell and a defiance and an appeal. The heavy roar of the duck gun came.

At twenty yards the double charge tore the throat out of him. He came down, face forward, upon the log and clung there, his trunk twisting distortedly, his legs twitching and kicking like the legs of a speared frog, his shoulders hunching and lifting spasmodically as the life ran out of him all in one swift coursing flow. His head canted up between the heaving shoulders, his eyes looked full on the staring face of his murderer, and then the blood came out of his mouth and Fishhead, in death still as much fish as man, slid flopping, head first, off the end of the log and sank, face downward, slowly, his limbs all extended out. One after another a string of big bubbles came up to burst in the middle of a widening reddish stain on the coffee-colored water.

The brothers watched this, held by the horror of the thing they had done, and the cranky dugout, tipped far over by the recoil of the gun, took water steadily across its gunwale; and now there was a sudden stroke from below upon its careening bottom and it went over and they were in the lake. But shore was only twenty feet away, the trunk of the uprooted tree only five. Joel, still holding fast to his hot gun, made for the log, gaining it with one stroke. He threw his free arm over it and clung there, treading water, as he shook his eyes free. Something gripped him—some great, sinewy, unseen thing gripped him fast by the thigh, crushing down on his flesh.

He uttered no cry, but his eyes popped out and his

mouth set in a square shape of agony, and his fingers gripped into the bark of the tree like grapples. He was pulled down and down, by steady jerks, not rapidly but steadily, so steadily, and as he went his fingernails tore four little white strips in the tree bark. His mouth went under, next his popping eyes, then his erect hair, and finally his clawing, clutching hand, and that was the end of him.

Jake's fate was harder still, for he lived longer—long enough to see Joel's finish. He saw it through the water that ran down his face, and with a great surge of his whole body he literally flung himself across the log and jerked his legs up high into the air to save them. He flung himself too far, though, for his face and chest hit the water on the far side. And out of this water rose the head of a great fish, with the lake slime of years on its flat, black head, its whiskers bristling, its corpsy eyes alight. Its horny jaws closed and clamped in the front of Jake's flannel shirt. His hand struck out wildly and was speared on a poisoned fin, and unlike Joel, he went from sight with a great yell and a whirling and a churning of the water that made the cornstalks circle on the edges of a small whirlpool.

But the whirlpool soon thinned away into widening rings of ripples and the cornstalks quit circling and became still again, and only the multiplying night noises sounded about the mouth of the slough.

The bodies of all three came ashore on the same day near the same place. Except for the gaping gunshot wound where the neck met the chest, Fishhead's body was unmarked. But the bodies of the two Baxters were so marred and mauled that the Reelfooters buried them together on the bank without ever knowing which might be Jake's and which might be Joel's.

THE FOUNTAIN OF GOLD

BY LAFCADIO HEARN

(THIS is the tale told in the last hours of a summer night to the old Spanish priest in the Hôtel Dieu, by an aged wanderer from the Spanish Americas; and I write it almost as I heard it from the priest's lips.)

"I could not sleep. The strange odors of the flowers; the sense of romantic excitement which fills a vivid imagination in a new land; the sight of a new heaven illuminated by unfamiliar constellations, and a new world which seemed to me a very garden of Eden,—perhaps all of these added to beget the spirit of unrest which consumed me as with a fever. I rose and went out under the stars. I heard the heavy breathing of the soldiers, whose steel corselets glimmered in the ghostly light;—the occasional snorting of the horses;—the regular tread of the sentries guarding the sleep of their comrades. An inexplicable longing came upon me to wander alone into the deep forest beyond, such a longing as in summer days in Seville had seized me when I heard the bearded soldiers tell of the enchantment of the New World. I did not dream of danger; for in those days I feared neither God nor devil, and the Commander held me the most desperate of that desperate band of men. I strode out beyond the lines;—the grizzled sentry growled out a rough protest as I received his greeting in sullen silence;—I cursed him and passed on.

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“The deep sapphire of that marvelous Southern night paled to pale amethyst; then the horizon brightened into yellow behind the crests of the palm trees; and at last the diamond-fires of the Southern Cross faded out. Far behind me I heard the Spanish bugles, ringing their call through the odorous air of that tropical morning, quaveringly sweet in the distance, faint as music from another world. Yet I did not dream of retracing my steps. As in a dream I wandered on under the same strange impulse, and the bugle-call again rang out, but fainter than before. I do not know if it was the strange perfume of the strange flowers, or the odors of the spice-bearing trees, or the caressing warmth of the tropical air, or witchcraft; but a new sense of feeling came to me. I would have given worlds to have been able to weep: I felt the old fierceness die out of my heart;—wild doves flew down from the trees and perched upon my shoulders, and I laughed to find myself caressing them—I whose hands were red with blood, and whose heart was black with crime.

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“And the day broadened and brightened into a paradise of emerald and gold; birds no larger than bees, but painted with strange metallic fires of color, hummed about me;—parrots chattered in the trees;—apes swung themselves with fantastic agility from branch to branch;—a million million blossoms of inexpressible beauty opened their silky hearts to the sun;—and the drowsy perfume of the dreamy woods became more intoxicating. It seemed to me a land of witchcraft, such as the Moors told us of in Spain, when they spoke of countries lying near the rising of the sun. And it came to pass that I found myself dreaming of the Fountain of Gold which Ponce de Leon sought.

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“Then it seemed to me that the trees became loftier. The palms looked older than the deluge, and their cacique-plumes seemed to touch the azure of heaven. And suddenly I found myself within a great clear space, ringed in by the primeval trees so lofty that all within their circle was bathed in verdant shadow. The ground was carpeted with moss and odorous herbs and flowers, so thickly growing that the foot made no sound upon their elastic leaves and petals; and from the circle of the trees on every side the land sloped down to a vast basin filled with sparkling water, and there was a lofty jet in the midst of the basin, such as I had seen in the Moorish courts of Granada. The water was deep and clear as the eyes of a woman in her first hours of love;—I saw gold-sprinkled sands far below, and rainbow lights where the rain of the fountain made ripples. It seemed strange to me that the jet leaped from nothing formed by the hand of man; it was as though a mighty underflow forced it upward in a gush above the bright level of the basin. I unbuckled my armor and doffed my clothing, and plunged into the fountain with delight. It was far deeper than I expected; the crystalline purity of the water had deceived me—I could not even dive to the bottom. I swam over to the fountain jet and found to my astonishment that while the waters of the basin were cool as the flow of a mountain spring, the leaping column of living crystal in its center was warm as blood!

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“I felt an inexpressible exhilaration from my strange bath; I gamboled in the water like a boy; I even cried aloud to the woods and the birds; and the parrots shouted back my cries from the heights of the palms. And, leaving the fountain, I felt no fatigue or hunger; but when I lay

down a deep and leaden sleep came upon me,—such a sleep as a child sleeps in the arms of its mother.

“When I awoke a woman was bending over me. She was wholly unclad, and with her perfect beauty, and the tropical tint of her skin, she looked like a statue of amber. Her flowing black hair was interwoven with white flowers; her eyes were very large, and dark and deep, and fringed with silky lashes. She wore no ornaments of gold, like the Indian girls I had seen,—only the white flowers in her hair. I looked at her wonderingly as upon an angel; and with her tall and slender grace she seemed to me, indeed, of another world. For the first time in all that dark life of mine, I felt fear in the presence of a woman; but a fear not unmixed with pleasure. I spoke to her in Spanish; but she only opened her dark eyes more widely, and smiled. I made signs; she brought me fruits and clear water in a gourd; and as she bent over me again, I kissed her.

“Why should I tell of our love, Padre?—let me only say that those were the happiest years of my life. Earth and heaven seemed to have embraced in that strange land; it was Eden; it was paradise; never-wearying love, eternal youth! No other mortal ever knew such happiness as I;—yet none ever suffered so agonizing a loss. We lived upon fruits and the water of the Fountain;—our bed was the moss and the flowers; the doves were our playmates;—the stars our lamps. Never storm or cloud;—never rain or heat;—only the tepid summer drowsy with sweet odors, the songs of birds and murmuring water; the waving palms, the jewel-breasted minstrels of the woods who chanted to us through the night. And we never left the little valley. My armor and my good rapier rusted away;

my garments were soon worn out; but there we needed no raiment; it was all warmth and light and repose. 'We shall never grow old here,' she whispered. But when I asked her if that was, indeed, the Fountain of Youth, she only smiled and placed her finger upon her lips. Neither could I ever learn her name. I could not acquire her tongue; yet she had learned mine with marvelous quickness. We never had a quarrel;—I could never find heart to even frown upon her. She was all gentleness, playfulness, loveliness—but what do you care, Padre, to hear all these things?

“Did I say our happiness was perfect? No: there was one strange cause of anxiety which regularly troubled me. Each night, while lying in her arms, I heard the Spanish bugle-call,—far and faint and ghostly as a voice from the dead. It seemed like a melancholy voice calling to me. And whenever the sound floated to us, I felt that she trembled, and wound her arms faster about me, and she would weep until I kissed away her tears. And through all those years I heard the bugle-call. Did I say years?—nay, *centuries!*—for in that land one never grows old; I heard it through centuries after all my companions were dead.”

(The priest crossed himself under the lamplight, and murmured a prayer. “Continue, *hijo mio*,” he said at last; “tell me all.”)

“It was anger, Padre; I wished to see for myself where the sounds came from that tortured my life. And I know not why she slept so deeply that night. As I bent over to kiss her, she moaned in her dreams, and I saw a crystal tear glimmer on the dark fringe of her eyes—and then that cursed bugle-call——”

The old man's voice failed a moment. He gave a feeble cough, spat blood, and went on:—

“I have little time to tell you more, Padre. I never could find my way back again to the valley. I lost her forever. When I wandered out among men, they spoke another language that I could not speak; and the world was changed. When I met Spaniards at last, they spoke a tongue unlike what I heard in my youth. I did not dare to tell my story. They would have confined me with madmen. I speak the Spanish of other centuries; and the men of my own nation mock my quaint ways. Had I lived much in this new world of yours, I should have been regarded as mad, for my thoughts and ways are not of to-day; but I have spent my life among the swamps of the tropics, with the python and the cayman, in the heart of untrodden forests and by the shores of rivers that have no names, and the ruins of dead Indian cities,—until my strength died and my hair became white in looking for her.”

“My son,” cried the old priest, “banish these evil thoughts. I have heard your story; and any, save a priest, would believe you mad. I believe all you have told me;—the legends of the Church contain much that is equally strange. You have been a great sinner in your youth; and God has punished you by making your sins the very instrument of your punishment. Yet has He not preserved you through the centuries that you might repent? Banish all thoughts of the demon who still tempts you in the shape of a woman; repent and commend your soul to God, that I may absolve you.”

“Repent!” said the dying man, fixing upon the priest's face his great black eyes, which flamed up again as with the fierce fires of his youth; “repent, father? I cannot re-

pent! I love her!—I love her! And if there be a life beyond death, I shall love her through all time and eternity:—more than my own soul I love her!—more than my hope of heaven!—more than my fear of death and hell!”

The priest fell on his knees, and, covering his face, prayed fervently. When he lifted his eyes again, the soul had passed away unabsolved; but there was such a smile upon the dead face that the priest wondered, and, forgetting the *Miserere* upon his lips, involuntarily muttered: “He hath found Her at last.” And the east brightened; and touched by the magic of the rising sun, the mists above his rising formed themselves into a Fountain of Gold.

THE SHADOWY THIRD

BY ELLEN GLASGOW

WHEN the call came I remember that I turned from the telephone in a romantic flutter. Though I had spoken only once to the great surgeon, Roland Maradick, I felt on that December afternoon that to speak to him only once—to watch him in the operating-room for a single hour—was an adventure which drained the color and the excitement from the rest of life. After all these years of work on typhoid and pneumonia cases, I can still feel the delicious tremor of my young pulses; I can still see the winter sunshine slanting through the hospital windows over the white uniforms of the nurses.

“He didn’t mention me by name. Can there be a mistake?” I stood, incredulous yet ecstatic, before the superintendent of the hospital.

“No, there isn’t a mistake. I was talking to him before you came down.” Miss Hemphill’s strong face softened while she looked at me. She was a big, resolute woman, a distant Canadian relative of my mother’s, and the kind of nurse I had discovered in the month since I had come up from Richmond, that Northern hospital boards, if not Northern patients, appear instinctively to select. From the first, in spite of her hardness, she had taken a liking—I hesitate to use the word “fancy” for a preference so impersonal—to her Virginia cousin. After all, it isn’t every

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Southern nurse, just out of training, who can boast a kinswoman in the superintendent of a New York hospital.

"And he made you understand positively that he meant me?" The thing was so wonderful that I simply couldn't believe it.

"He asked particularly for the nurse who was with Miss Hudson last week when he operated. I think he didn't even remember that you had a name. When I asked if he meant Miss Randolph, he repeated that he wanted the nurse who had been with Miss Hudson. She was small, he said, and cheerful-looking. This, of course, might apply to one or two of the others, but none of these was with Miss Hudson."

"Then I suppose it is really true?" My pulses were tingling. "And I am to be there at six o'clock?"

"Not a minute later. The day nurse goes off duty at that hour, and Mrs. Maradick is never left by herself for an instant."

"It is her mind, isn't it? And that makes it all the stranger that he should select me, for I have had so few mental cases."

"So few cases of any kind," Miss Hemphill was smiling, and when she smiled I wondered if the other nurses would know her. "By the time you have gone through the treadmill in New York, Margaret, you will have lost a good many things besides your inexperience. I wonder how long you will keep your sympathy and your imagination? After all, wouldn't you have made a better novelist than a nurse?"

"I can't help putting myself into my cases. I suppose one ought not to?"

"It isn't a question of what one ought to do, but of what one must. When you are drained of every bit of sympathy and enthusiasm, and have got nothing in return

for it, not even thanks, you will understand why I try to keep you from wasting yourself."

"But surely in a case like this—for Doctor Maradick?"

"Oh, well, of course—for Doctor Maradick." She must have seen that I implored her confidence, for, after a minute, she let fall carelessly a gleam of light on the situation: "It is a very sad case when you think what a charming man and a great surgeon Doctor Maradick is."

Above the starched collar of my uniform I felt the blood leap in bounds to my cheeks. "I have spoken to him only once," I murmured, "but he is charming, and so kind and handsome, isn't he?"

"His patients adore him."

"Oh, yes, I've seen that. Everyone hangs on his visits." Like the patients and the other nurses, I also had come by delightful, if imperceptible, degrees to hang on the daily visits of Doctor Maradick. He was, I suppose, born to be a hero to women. From my first day in his hospital, from the moment when I watched, through closed shutters, while he stepped out of his car, I have never doubted that he was assigned to the great part in the play. If I had been ignorant of his spell—of the charm he exercised over his hospital—I should have felt it in the waiting hush, like a drawn breath, which followed his ring at the door and preceded his imperious footstep on the stairs. My first impression of him, even after the terrible events of the next year, records a memory that is both careless and splendid. At that moment, when, gazing through the chinks in the shutters, I watched him, in his coat of dark fur, cross the pavement over the pale streaks of sunshine, I knew beyond any doubt—I knew with a sort of infallible prescience—that my fate was irretrievably bound up with his in the future. I knew this, I repeat, though Miss Hemphill would still insist that

my foreknowledge was merely a sentimental gleaning from indiscriminate novels. But it wasn't only first love, impressionable as my kinswoman believed me to be. It wasn't only the way he looked. Even more than his appearance—more than the shining dark of his eyes, the silvery brown of his hair, the dusky glow in his face—even more than his charm and his magnificence, I think, the beauty and sympathy in his voice won my heart. It was a voice, I heard someone say afterwards, that ought always to speak poetry.

So you will see why—if you do not understand at the beginning, I can never hope to make you believe impossible things!—so you will see why I accepted the call when it came as an imperative summons. I couldn't have stayed away after he sent for me. However much I may have tried not to go, I know that in the end I must have gone. In those days, while I was still hoping to write novels, I used to talk a great deal about “destiny” (I have learned since then how silly all such talk is), and I suppose it was my “destiny” to be caught in the web of Roland Maradick's personality. But I am not the first nurse to grow love-sick about a doctor who never gave her a thought.

“I am glad you got the call, Margaret. It may mean a great deal to you. Only try not to be too emotional.” I remember that Miss Hemphill was holding a bit of rose-geranium in her hand while she spoke—one of the patients had given it to her from a pot she kept in her room,—and the scent of the flower is still in my nostrils—or my memory. Since then—oh, long since then—I have wondered if she also had been caught in the web.

“I wish I knew more about the case.” I was pressing for light. “Have you ever seen Mrs. Maradick?”

“Oh, dear, yes. They have been married only a little

over a year, and in the beginning she used to come sometimes to the hospital and wait outside while the doctor made his visits. She was a very sweet-looking woman then—not exactly pretty, but fair and slight, with the loveliest smile, I think, I have ever seen. In those first months she was so much in love that we used to laugh about it among ourselves. To see her face light up when the doctor came out of the hospital and crossed the pavement to his car was as good as a play. We never tired of watching her—I wasn't superintendent then, so I had more time to look out of the window while I was on day duty. Once or twice she brought her little girl in to see one of the patients. The child was so much like her that you would have known them anywhere for mother and daughter."

I had heard that Mrs. Maradick was a widow, with one child, when she first met the doctor, and I asked now, still seeking an illumination I had not found, "There was a great deal of money, wasn't there?"

"A great fortune. If she hadn't been so attractive, people would have said, I suppose, that Doctor Maradick married her for her money. Only," she appeared to make an effort of memory, "I believe I've heard somehow that it was all left in trust away from Mrs. Maradick if she married again. I can't, to save my life, remember just how it was; but it was a queer will, I know, and Mrs. Maradick wasn't to come into the money unless the child didn't live to grow up. The pity of it——"

A young nurse came into the office to ask for something—the keys, I think, of the operating-room, and Miss Hemphill broke off inconclusively as she hurried out of the door. I was sorry that she left off just when she did. Poor Mrs. Maradick! Perhaps I was too emotional, but even

before I saw her I had begun to feel her pathos and her strangeness.

My preparations took only a few minutes. In those days I always kept a suitcase packed and ready for sudden calls; and it was not yet six o'clock when I turned from Tenth Street into Fifth Avenue, and stopped for a minute, before ascending the steps, to look at the house in which Doctor Maradick lived. A fine rain was falling, and I remember thinking, as I turned the corner, how depressing the weather must be for Mrs. Maradick. It was an old house, with damp-looking walls (though that may have been because of the rain) and a spindle-shaped iron railing which ran up the stone steps to the black door, where I noticed a dim flicker through the old-fashioned fanlight. Afterwards I discovered that Mrs. Maradick had been born in the house—her maiden name was Calloran—and that she had never wanted to live anywhere else. She was a woman—this I found out when I knew her better—of strong attachments to both persons and places; and though Doctor Maradick had tried to persuade her to move uptown after her marriage, she had clung, against his wishes, to the old house in lower Fifth Avenue. I dare say she was obstinate about it in spite of her gentleness and her passion for the doctor. Those sweet, soft women, especially when they have always been rich, are sometimes amazingly obstinate. I have nursed so many of them since—women with strong affections and weak intellects—that I have come to recognize the type as soon as I set eyes upon it.

My ring at the bell was answered after a little delay, and when I entered the house I saw that the hall was quite dark except for the waning glow from an open fire which burned in the library. When I gave my name, and added that I

was the night nurse, the servant appeared to think my humble presence unworthy of illumination. He was an old negro butler, inherited perhaps from Mrs. Maradick's mother, who, I learned afterwards, was from South Carolina; and while he passed me on his way up the staircase, I heard him vaguely muttering that he "wa'n't gwinter tu'n on dem lights twel de chile had done playin'."

To the right of the hall, the soft glow drew me into the library, and crossing the threshold timidly, I stooped to dry my wet coat by the fire. As I bent there, meaning to start up at the first sound of a footstep, I thought how cozy the room was after the damp walls outside to which some bared creepers were clinging; and I was watching the strange shapes and patterns the firelight made on the old Persian rug, when the lamps of a slowly turning motor flashed on me through the white shades at the window. Still dazzled by the glare, I looked round in the dimness and saw a child's ball of red and blue rubber roll towards me out of the gloom of the adjoining room. A moment later, while I made a vain attempt to capture the toy as it spun past me, a little girl darted airily, with peculiar lightness and grace, through the doorway, and stopped quickly, as if in surprise at the sight of a stranger. She was a small child—so small and slight that her footsteps made no sound on the polished floor of the threshold; and I remember thinking while I looked at her that she had the gravest and sweetest face I had ever seen. She couldn't—I decided this afterwards—have been more than six or seven years old, yet she stood there with a curious prim dignity, like the dignity of an elderly person, and gazed up at me with enigmatical eyes. She was dressed in Scotch plaid, with a bit of red ribbon in her hair, which was cut in a fringe over her forehead and hung very straight to her shoulders.

Charming as she was, from her uncurled brown hair to the white socks and black slippers on her little feet, I recall most vividly the singular look in her eyes, which appeared in the shifting light to be of an indeterminate color. For the odd thing about this look was that it was not the look of childhood at all. It was the look of profound experience, of bitter knowledge.

“Have you come for your ball?” I asked; but while the friendly question was still on my lips, I heard the servant returning. In my confusion I made a second ineffectual grasp at the plaything, which had rolled away from me into the dusk of the drawing-room. Then, as I raised my head, I saw that the child also had slipped from the rooms; and without looking after her I followed the old negro into the pleasant study above, where the great surgeon awaited me.

Ten years ago, before hard nursing had taken so much out of me, I blushed very easily, and I was aware at the moment when I crossed Doctor Maradick’s study that my cheeks were the color of peonies. Of course, I was a fool—no one knows this better than I do—but I had never been alone, even for an instant, with him before, and the man was more than a hero to me, he was—there isn’t any reason now why I should blush over the confession—almost a god. At that age I was mad about the wonders of surgery, and Roland Maradick in the operating-room was magician enough to have turned an older and more sensible head than mine. Added to his great reputation and his marvelous skill, he was, I am sure of this, the most splendid-looking man, even at forty-five, that one could imagine. Had he been ungracious—had he been positively rude to me, I should still have adored him; but when he held out his hand, and greeted me in the charming way he had with women, I felt

that I would have died for him. It is no wonder that a saying went about the hospital that every woman he operated on fell in love with him. As for the nurses—well, there wasn't a single one of them who had escaped his spell—not even Miss Hemphill, who could have been scarcely a day under fifty.

“I am glad you could come, Miss Randolph. You were with Miss Hudson last week when I operated?”

I bowed. To save my life I couldn't have spoken without blushing the redder.

“I noticed your bright face at the time. Brightness, I think, is what Mrs. Maradick needs. She finds her day nurse depressing.” His eyes rested so kindly upon me that I have suspected since that he was not entirely unaware of my worship. It was a small thing, heaven knows, to flatter his vanity—a nurse just out of a training school—but to some men no tribute is too insignificant to give pleasure.

“You will do your best, I am sure.” He hesitated an instant—just long enough for me to perceive the anxiety beneath the genial smile on his face—and then added gravely, “We wish to avoid, if possible, having to send her away.”

I could only murmur in response, and after a few carefully chosen words about his wife's illness, he rang the bell and directed the maid to take me upstairs to my room. Not until I was ascending the stairs to the third story did it occur to me that he had really told me nothing. I was as perplexed about the nature of Mrs. Maradick's malady as I had been when I entered the house.

I found my room pleasant enough. It had been arranged—at Doctor Maradick's request, I think—that I was to sleep in the house, and after my austere little bed at the

hospital, I was agreeably surprised by the cheerful look of the apartment into which the maid led me. The walls were papered in roses, and there were curtains of flowered chintz at the window, which looked down on a small formal garden at the rear of the house. This the maid told me, for it was too dark for me to distinguish more than a marble fountain and a fir-tree, which looked old, though I afterwards learned that it was replanted almost every season.

In ten minutes I had slipped into my uniform and was ready to go to my patient; but for some reason—to this day I have never found out what it was that turned her against me at the start—Mrs. Maradick refused to receive me. While I stood outside her door I heard the day nurse trying to persuade her to let me come in. It wasn't any use, however, and in the end I was obliged to go back to my room and wait until the poor lady got over her whim and consented to see me. That was long after dinner—it must have been nearer eleven than ten o'clock—and Miss Peterson was quite worn out by the time she came for me.

"I'm afraid you'll have a bad night," she said as we went downstairs together. That was her way, I soon saw, to expect the worst of everything and everybody.

"Does she often keep you up like this?"

"Oh, no, she is usually very considerate. I never knew a sweeter character. But she still has this hallucination——"

Here again, as in the scene with Doctor Maradick, I felt that the explanation had only deepened the mystery. Mrs. Maradick's hallucination, whatever form it assumed, was evidently a subject for evasion and subterfuge in the household. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask, "What is her hallucination?"—but before I could get the words past my lips we had reached Mrs. Maradick's door, and Miss Peterson motioned me to be silent. As the door opened a little

way to admit me, I saw that Mrs. Maradick was already in bed, and that the lights were out except for a night-lamp burning on a candle-stand beside a book and a carafe of water.

"I won't go in with you," said Miss Peterson in a whisper; and I was on the point of stepping over the threshold when I saw the little girl, in the dress of Scotch plaid, slip by me from the dusk of the room into the electric light of the hall. She held a doll in her arms, and as she went by she dropped a doll's work-basket in the doorway. Miss Peterson must have picked up the toy, for when I turned in a minute to look for it I found that it was gone. I remember thinking that it was late for a child to be up—she looked delicate, too—but, after all it was no business of mine, and four years in the hospital had taught me never to meddle in things that do not concern me. There is nothing a nurse learns quicker than not to try to put the world to rights in a day.

When I crossed the floor to the chair by Mrs. Maradick's bed, she turned over on her side and looked at me with the sweetest and saddest smile.

"You are the night nurse," she said in a gentle voice; and from the moment she spoke I knew that there was nothing hysterical or violent about her mania—or hallucination, as they called it. "They told me your name, but I have forgotten it."

"Randolph—Margaret Randolph." I liked her from the start, and I think she must have seen it.

"You look very young, Miss Randolph."

"I am twenty-two, but I suppose I don't look quite my age. People usually think I am younger."

For a minute she was silent, and while I settled myself in the chair by the bed, I thought how strikingly she re-

seemed the little girl I had seen first in the afternoon, and then leaving her room a few moments before. They had the same small, heart-shaped faces, colored ever so faintly; the same straight, soft hair, between brown and flaxen; and the same large, grave eyes, set very far apart under arched eyebrows. What surprised me most, however, was that they both looked at me with that enigmatical and vaguely wondering expression—only in Mrs. Maradick's face the vagueness seemed to change now and then to a definite fear—a flash, I had almost said, of startled horror.

I sat quite still in my chair, and until the time came for Mrs. Maradick to take her medicine not a word passed between us. Then, when I bent over her with the glass in my hand, she raised her head from the pillow and said in a whisper of suppressed intensity:

“You look kind. I wonder if you could have seen my little girl?”

As I slipped my arm under the pillow I tried to smile cheerfully down on her. “Yes, I've seen her twice. I'd know her anywhere by her likeness to you.”

A glow shone in her eyes, and I thought how pretty she must have been before illness took the life and animation out of her features. “Then I know you're good.” Her voice was so strained and low that I could barely hear it. “If you weren't good you couldn't have seen her.”

I thought this queer enough, but all I answered was, “She looked delicate to be sitting up so late.”

A quiver passed over her thin features, and for a minute I thought she was going to burst into tears. As she had taken the medicine, I put the glass back on the candlestand, and bending over the bed, smoothed the straight brown hair, which was as fine and soft as spun silk, back

from her forehead. There was something about her—I don't know what it was—that made you love her as soon as she looked at you.

“She always had that light and airy way, though she was never sick a day in her life,” she answered calmly after a pause. Then, groping for my hand, she whispered passionately, “You must not tell him—you must not tell any one that you have seen her!”

“I must not tell any one?” Again I had the impression that had come to me first in Doctor Maradick's study, and afterwards with Miss Peterson on the staircase, that I was seeking a gleam of light in the midst of obscurity.

“Are you sure there isn't any one listening—that there isn't any one at the door?” she asked, pushing aside my arm and raising herself on the pillows.

“Quite, quite sure. They have put out the lights in the hall.”

“And you will not tell him? Promise me that you will not tell him.” The startled horror flashed from the vague wonder of her expression. “He doesn't like her to come back, because he killed her.”

“Because he killed her!” Then it was that light burst on me in a blaze. So this was Mrs. Maradick's hallucination! She believed that her child was dead—the little girl I had seen with my own eyes leaving her room; and she believed that her husband—the great surgeon we worshiped in the hospital—had murdered her. No wonder they veiled the dreadful obsession in mystery! No wonder that even Miss Peterson had not dared to drag the horrid thing out into the light! It was the kind of hallucination one simply couldn't stand having to face.

“There is no use telling people things that nobody believes,” she resumed slowly, still holding my hand in a grasp

that would have hurt me if her fingers had not been so fragile. "Nobody believes that he killed her. Nobody believes that she comes back every day to the house. Nobody believes—and yet you saw her——"

"Yes, I saw her—but why should your husband have killed her?" I spoke soothingly, as one would speak to a person who was quite mad. Yet she was not mad, I could have sworn this while I looked at her.

For a moment she moaned inarticulately, as if the horror of her thoughts were too great to pass into speech. Then she flung out her thin, bare arm with a wild gesture.

"Because he never loved me!" she said. "He never loved me!"

"But he married you," I urged gently while I stroked her hair. "If he hadn't loved you, why should he have married you?"

"He wanted the money—my little girl's money. It all goes to him when I die."

"But he is rich himself. He must make a fortune from his profession."

"It isn't enough. He wanted millions." She had grown stern and tragic. "No, he never loved me. He loved someone else from the beginning—before I knew him."

It was quite useless, I saw, to reason with her. If she wasn't mad, she was in a state of terror and despondency so black that it had almost crossed the border-line into madness. I thought once that I would go upstairs and bring the child down from her nursery; but, after a moment's hesitation, I realized that Miss Peterson and Doctor Maradick must have long ago tried all these measures. Clearly, there was nothing to do except soothe and quiet her as much as I

could; and this I did until she dropped into a light sleep which lasted well into the morning.

By seven o'clock I was worn out—not from work but from the strain on my sympathy—and I was glad, indeed, when one of the maids came in to bring me an early cup of coffee. Mrs. Maradick was still sleeping—it was a mixture of bromide and chloral I had given her—and she did not wake until Miss Peterson came on duty an hour or two later. Then, when I went downstairs, I found the dining-room deserted except for the old housekeeper, who was looking over the silver. Doctor Maradick, she explained to me presently, had his breakfast served in the morning-room on the other side of the house.

“And the little girl? Does she take her meals in the nursery?”

She threw me a startled glance. Was it, I questioned afterwards, one of distrust or apprehension?

“There isn't any little girl. Haven't you heard?”

“Heard? No. Why, I saw her only yesterday.” The look she gave me—I was sure of it now—was full of alarm.

“The little girl—she was the sweetest child I ever saw—died just two months ago of pneumonia.”

“But she couldn't have died.” I was a fool to let this out, but the shock had completely unnerved me. “I tell you I saw her yesterday.”

The alarm in her face deepened. “That is Mrs. Maradick's trouble. She believes that she still sees her.”

“But don't you see her?” I drove the question home bluntly.

“No.” She set her lips tightly. “I never see anything.”

So I had been wrong, after all, and the explanation, when it came, only accentuated the terror. The child was dead—she had died of pneumonia two months ago—and yet I had

seen her, with my own eyes, playing ball in the library; I had seen her slipping out of her mother's room, with her doll in her arms.

"Is there another child in the house? Could there be a child belonging to one of the servants?" A gleam had shot through the fog in which I was groping.

"No, there isn't any other. The Doctor tried bringing one once, but it threw the poor lady into such a state she almost died of it. Besides, there wouldn't be any other child as quiet and sweet-looking as Dorothea. To see her skipping along in her dress of Scotch plaid used to make me think of a fairy, though they say that fairies wear nothing but white or green."

"Has any one else seen her—the child, I mean—any of the servants?"

"Only old Gabriel, the colored butler, who came with Mrs. Maradick's mother from South Carolina. I've heard that negroes often have a kind of second sight—though I don't know that that is just what you would call it. But they seem to believe in the supernatural by instinct, and Gabriel is so old and doty—he does no work except answer the door-bell and clean the silver—that nobody pays much attention to anything that he sees——"

"Is the child's nursery kept as it used to be?"

"Oh, no. The doctor had all the toys sent to the children's hospital. That was a great grief to Mrs. Maradick; but Doctor Brandon thought, and all the nurses agreed with him, that it was best for her not to be allowed to keep the room as it was when Dorothea was living."

"Dorothea? Was that the child's name?"

"Yes, it means the gift of God, doesn't it? She was named after the mother of Mrs. Maradick's first husband,

Mr. Ballard. He was the grave, quiet kind—not the least like the doctor.”

I wondered if the other dreadful obsession of Mrs. Maradick's had drifted down through the nurses or the servants to the housekeeper; but she said nothing about it, and since she was, I suspected, a garrulous person, I thought it wiser to assume that the gossip had not reached her.

A little later, when breakfast was over and I had not yet gone upstairs to my room, I had my first interview with Doctor Brandon, the famous alienist who was in charge of the case. I had never seen him before, but from the first moment that I looked at him I took his measure almost by intuition. He was, I suppose, honest enough—I have always granted him that, bitterly as I have felt towards him. It wasn't his fault that he lacked red blood in his brain, or that he had formed the habit, from long association with abnormal phenomena, of regarding all life as a disease. He was the sort of physician—every nurse will understand what I mean—who deals instinctively with groups instead of with individuals. He was long and solemn and very round in the face; and I hadn't talked to him ten minutes before I knew he had been educated in Germany, and that he had learned over there to treat every emotion as a pathological manifestation. I used to wonder what he got out of life—what any one got out of life who had analyzed away everything except the bare structure.

When I reached my room at last, I was so tired that I could barely remember either the questions Doctor Brandon had asked or the directions he had given me. I fell asleep, I know, almost as soon as my head touched the pillow; and the maid who came to inquire if I wanted luncheon decided to let me finish my nap. In the afternoon, when she

returned with a cup of tea, she found me still heavy and drowsy. Though I was used to night nursing, I felt as if I had danced from sunset to daybreak. It was fortunate, I reflected, while I drank my tea, that every case didn't wear on one's sympathies as acutely as Mrs. Maradick's hallucination had worn on mine.

Through the day I did not see Doctor Maradick; but at seven o'clock when I came up from my early dinner on my way to take the place of Miss Peterson, who had kept on duty an hour later than usual, he met me in the hall and asked me to come into his study. I thought him handsomer than ever in his evening clothes, with a white flower in his buttonhole. He was going to some public dinner, the housekeeper told me, but then, he was always going somewhere. I believe he didn't dine at home a single evening that winter.

"Did Mrs. Maradick have a good night?" He had closed the door after us, and turning now with the question, he smiled kindly, as if he wished to put me at ease in the beginning.

"She slept very well after she took the medicine. I gave her that at eleven o'clock."

For a minute he regarded me silently, and I was aware that his personality—his charm—was focused upon me. It was almost as if I stood in the center of converging rays of light, so vivid was my impression of him.

"Did she allude in any way to her—to her hallucination?" he asked.

How the warning reached me—what invisible waves of sense-perception transmitted the message—I have never known; but while I stood there, facing the splendor of the doctor's presence, every intuition cautioned me that the time had come when I must take sides in the household.

While I stayed there I must stand either with Mrs. Maradick or against her.

"She talked quite rationally," I replied after a moment.

"What did she say?"

"She told me how she was feeling, that she missed her child, and that she walked a little every day about her room."

His face changed—how I could not at first determine.

"Have you seen Doctor Brandon?"

"He came this morning to give me his directions."

"He thought her less well to-day. He has advised me to send her to Rosedale."

I have never, even in secret, tried to account for Doctor Maradick. He may have been sincere. I tell only what I know—not what I believe or imagine—and the human is sometimes as inscrutable, as inexplicable, as the supernatural.

While he watched me I was conscious of an inner struggle, as if opposing angels warred somewhere in the depths of my being. When at last I made my decision, I was acting less from reason, I knew, than in obedience to the pressure of some secret current of thought. Heaven knows, even then, the man held me captive while I defied him.

"Doctor Maradick," I lifted my eyes for the first time frankly to his, "I believe that your wife is as sane as I am—or as you are."

He started. "Then she did not talk freely to you?"

"She may be mistaken, unstrung, piteously distressed in mind"—I brought this out with emphasis—"but she is not—I am willing to stake my future on it—a fit subject for an asylum. It would be foolish—it would be cruel—to send her to Rosedale."

“Cruel, you say?” A troubled look crossed his face, and his voice grew very gentle. “You do not imagine that I could be cruel to her?”

“No, I do not think that.” My voice also had softened.

“We will let things go on as they are. Perhaps Doctor Brandon may have some other suggestion to make.” He drew out his watch and compared it with the clock—nervously, I observed, as if his action were a screen for his discomfiture or perplexity. “I must be going now. We will speak of this again in the morning.”

But in the morning we did not speak of it, and during the month that I nursed Mrs. Maradick I was not called again into her husband’s study. When I met him in the hall or on the staircase, which was seldom, he was as charming as ever; yet, in spite of his courtesy, I had a persistent feeling that he had taken my measure on that evening, and that he had no further use for me.

As the days went by Mrs. Maradick seemed to grow stronger. Never, after our first night together, had she mentioned the child to me; never had she alluded by so much as a word to her dreadful charge against her husband. She was like any woman recovering from a great sorrow, except that she was sweeter and gentler. It is no wonder that everyone who came near her loved her; for there was a loveliness about her like the mystery of light, not of darkness. She was, I have always thought, as much of an angel as it is possible for a woman to be on this earth. And yet, angelic as she was, there were times when it seemed to me that she both hated and feared her husband. Though he never entered her room while I was there, and I never heard his name on her lips until an hour before the end,

still I could tell by the look of terror in her face whenever his step passed down the hall that her very soul shivered at his approach.

During the whole month I did not see the child again, though one night, when I came suddenly into Mrs. Maradick's room, I found a little garden, such as children make out of pebbles and bits of box, on the window-sill. I did not mention it to Mrs. Maradick, and a little later, as the maid lowered the shades, I noticed that the garden had vanished. Since then I have often wondered if the child were invisible only to the rest of us, and if her mother still saw her. But there was no way of finding out except by questioning, and Mrs. Maradick was so well and patient that I hadn't the heart to question. Things couldn't have been better with her than they were, and I was beginning to tell myself that she might soon go out for an airing, when the end came so suddenly.

It was a mild January day—the kind of day that brings the foretaste of spring in the middle of winter, and when I came downstairs in the afternoon, I stopped a minute by the window at the end of the hall to look down on the box maze in the garden. There was an old fountain, bearing two laughing boys in marble, in the center of the graveled walk, and the water, which had been turned on that morning for Mrs. Maradick's pleasure, sparkled now like silver as the sunlight splashed over it. I had never before felt the air quite so soft and springlike in January; and I thought, as I gazed down on the garden, that it would be a good idea for Mrs. Maradick to go out and bask for an hour or so in the sunshine. It seemed strange to me that she was never allowed to get any fresh air except the air that came through her window.

When I went into her room, however, I found that she had no wish to go out. She was sitting, wrapped in shawls, by the open window, which looked down on the fountain; and as I entered she glanced up from a little book she was reading. A pot of daffodils stood on the window-sill—she was very fond of flowers and we tried always to keep some growing in her room.

“Do you know what I am reading, Miss Randolph?” she asked in her soft voice; and she read aloud a verse while I went over to the candle-stand to measure out a dose of medicine.

“‘If thou hast two loaves of bread, sell one and buy daffodils, for bread nourisheth the body, but daffodils delight the soul.’ That is very beautiful, don’t you think so?”

I said, “Yes,” that it was beautiful; and then I asked her if she wouldn’t go downstairs and walk about in the garden.

“He wouldn’t like it,” she answered; and it was the first time she had mentioned her husband to me since the night I came to her. “He doesn’t want me to go out.”

I tried to laugh her out of the idea; but it was no use, and after a few minutes I gave up and began talking of other things. Even then it did not occur to me that her fear of Doctor Maradick was anything but a fancy. I could see, of course, that she wasn’t out of her head; but sane persons, I knew, sometimes have unaccountable prejudices, and I accepted her dislike as a mere whim or aversion. I did not understand then and—I may as well confess this before the end comes—I do not understand any better to-day. I am writing down the things I actually saw, and I repeat that I have never had the slightest twist in the direction of the miraculous.

The afternoon slipped away while we talked—she talked brightly when any subject came up that interested her—and it was the last hour of day—that grave, still hour when the movement of life seems to droop and falter for a few precious minutes—that brought us the thing I had dreaded silently since my first night in the house. I remember that I had risen to close the window, and was leaning out for a breath of the mild air, when there was the sound of steps, consciously softened, in the hall outside, and Doctor Brandon's usual knock fell on my ears. Then, before I could cross the room, the door opened, and the doctor entered with Miss Peterson. The day nurse, I knew, was a stupid woman; but she had never appeared to me so stupid, so armored and encased in her professional manner, as she did at that moment.

"I am glad to see that you are taking the air." As Doctor Brandon came over to the window, I wondered maliciously what devil of contradictions had made him a distinguished specialist in nervous diseases.

"Who was the other doctor you brought this morning?" asked Mrs. Maradick gravely; and that was all I ever heard about the visit of the second alienist.

"Someone who is anxious to cure you." He dropped into a chair beside her and patted her hand with his long, pale fingers. "We are so anxious to cure you that we want to send you away to the country for a fortnight or so. Miss Peterson has come to help you to get ready, and I've kept my car waiting for you. There couldn't be a nicer day for a trip, could there?"

The moment had come at last. I knew at once what he meant, and so did Mrs. Maradick. A wave of color flowed and ebbed in her thin cheeks, and I felt her body quiver

when I moved from the window and put my arms on her shoulders. I was aware again, as I had been aware that evening in Doctor Maradick's study, of a current of thought that beat from the air around into my brain. Though it cost me my career as a nurse and my reputation for sanity, I knew that I must obey that invisible warning.

"You are going to take me to an asylum," said Mrs. Maradick.

He made some foolish denial or evasion; but before he had finished I turned from Mrs. Maradick and faced him impulsively. In a nurse this was flagrant rebellion, and I realized that the act wrecked my professional future. Yet I did not care—I did not hesitate. Something stronger than I was driving me on.

"Doctor Brandon," I said, "I beg you—I implore you to wait until to-morrow. There are things I must tell you."

A queer look came into his face, and I understood, even in my excitement, that he was mentally deciding in which group he should place me—to which class of morbid manifestations I must belong.

"Very well, very well, we will hear everything," he replied soothingly; but I saw him glance at Miss Peterson, and she went over to the wardrobe for Mrs. Maradick's fur coat and hat.

Suddenly, without warning, Mrs. Maradick threw the shawls away from her, and stood up. "If you send me away," she said, "I shall never come back. I shall never live to come back."

The gray of twilight was just beginning, and while she stood there, in the dusk of the room, her face shone out as pale and flower-like as the daffodils on the window-sill. "I cannot go away!" she cried in a sharper voice. "I cannot go away from my child!"

I saw her face clearly; I heard her voice; and then—the horror of the scene sweeps back over me!—I saw the door open slowly and the little girl run across the room to her mother. I saw the child lift her little arms, and I saw the mother stoop and gather her to her bosom. So closely locked were they in that passionate embrace that their forms seemed to mingle in the gloom that enveloped them.

“After this can you doubt?” I threw out the words almost savagely—and then, when I turned from the mother and child to Doctor Brandon and Miss Peterson, I knew breathlessly—oh, there was a shock in the discovery!—that they were blind to the child. Their blank faces revealed the consternation of ignorance, not of conviction. They had seen nothing except the vacant arms of the mother and the swift, erratic gesture with which she stooped to embrace some invisible presence. Only my vision—and I have asked myself since if the power of sympathy enabled me to penetrate the web of material fact and see the spiritual form of the child—only my vision was not blinded by the clay through which I looked.

“After this can you doubt?” Doctor Brandon had flung my words back to me. Was it his fault, poor man, if life had granted him only the eyes of flesh? Was it his fault if he could see only half of the thing there before him?

But they couldn't see, and since they couldn't see I realized that it was useless to tell them. Within an hour they took Mrs. Maradick to the asylum; and she went quietly, though when the time came for parting from me she showed some faint trace of feeling. I remember that at the last, while we stood on the pavement, she lifted her black veil, which she wore for the child, and said: “Stay with her, Miss Randolph, as long as you can, I shall never come back,”

Then she got into the car and was driven off, while I stood looking after her with a sob in my throat. Dreadful as I felt it to be, I didn't, of course, realize the full horror of it, or I couldn't have stood there quietly on the pavement. I didn't realize it, indeed, until several months afterwards when word came that she had died in the asylum. I never knew what her illness was, though I vaguely recall that something was said about "heart failure"—a loose enough term. My own belief is that she died simply of the terror of life.

To my surprise Doctor Maradick asked me to stay on as his office nurse after his wife went to Rosedale; and when the news of her death came there was no suggestion of my leaving. I don't know to this day why he wanted me in the house. Perhaps he thought I should have less opportunity to gossip if I stayed under his roof; perhaps he still wished to test the power of his charm over me. His vanity was incredible in so great a man. I have seen him flush with pleasure when people turned to look at him in the street, and I know that he was not above playing on the sentimental weakness of his patients. But he was magnificent, heaven knows! Few men, I imagine, have been the objects of so many foolish infatuations.

The next summer Doctor Maradick went abroad for two months, and while he was away I took my vacation in Virginia. When we came back the work was heavier than ever—his reputation by this time was tremendous—and my days were so crowded with appointments, and hurried flittings to emergency cases, that I had scarcely a minute left in which to remember poor Mrs. Maradick. Since the afternoon when she went to the asylum the child had not been in the house; and at last I was beginning to persuade my-

self that the little figure had been an optical illusion—the effect of shifting lights in the gloom of the old rooms—not the apparition I had once believed it to be. It does not take long for a phantom to fade from the memory—especially when one leads the active and methodical life I was forced into that winter. Perhaps—who knows?—(I remember telling myself) the doctors may have been right, after all, and the poor lady may have actually been out of her mind. With this view of the past, my judgment of Doctor Maradick insensibly altered. It ended, I think, in my acquitting him altogether. And then, just as he stood clear and splendid in my verdict of him, the reversal came so precipitately that I grow breathless now whenever I try to live it over again. The violence of the next turn in affairs left me, I often fancy, with a perpetual dizziness of the imagination.

It was in May that we heard of Mrs. Maradick's death, and exactly a year later, on a mild and fragrant afternoon, when the daffodils were blooming in patches around the old fountain in the garden, the housekeeper came into the office, where I lingered over some accounts, to bring me news of the doctor's approaching marriage.

"It is no more than we might have expected," she concluded rationally. "The house must be lonely for him—he is such a sociable man. But I can't help feeling," she brought out slowly after a pause in which I felt a shiver pass over me. "I can't help feeling that it is hard for that other woman to have all the money poor Mrs. Maradick's first husband left her."

"There is a great deal of money, then?" I asked curiously.

"A great deal." She waved her hand, as if words were futile to express the sum. "Millions and millions!"

"They will give up this house, of course?"

“That’s done already, my dear. There won’t be a brick left of it by this time next year. It’s to be pulled down and an apartment-house built on the ground.”

Again the shiver passed over me. I couldn’t bear to think of Mrs. Maradick’s old home falling to pieces.

“You didn’t tell me the name of the bride,” I said. “Is she someone he met while he was in Europe?”

“Dear me, no! She is the very lady he was engaged to before he married Mrs. Maradick, only she threw him over, so people said, because he wasn’t rich enough. Then she married some lord or prince from over the water; but there was a divorce, and now she has turned again to her old lover. He is rich enough now, I guess, even for her!”

It was all perfectly true, I suppose; it sounded as plausible as a story out of a newspaper; and yet while she told me I felt, or dreamed that I felt, a sinister, an impalpable hush in the air. I was nervous, no doubt; I was shaken by the suddenness with which the housekeeper had sprung her news on me; but as I sat there I had quite vividly an impression that the old house was listening—that there was a real, if invisible, presence somewhere in the room or the garden. Yet, when an instant afterwards I glanced through the long window which opened down to the brick terrace, I saw only the faint sunshine over the deserted garden, with its maze of box, its marble fountain, and its patches of daffodils.

The housekeeper had gone—one of the servants, I think, came for her—and I was sitting at my desk when the words of Mrs. Maradick on that last evening floated into my mind. The daffodils brought her back to me; for I thought, as I watched them growing, so still and golden in the sunshine, how she would have enjoyed them. Almost unconsciously I repeated the verse she had read to me:

“If thou hast two loaves of bread, sell one and buy daffodils”—and it was at this very instant, while the words were still on my lips, that I turned my eyes to the box maze, and saw the child skipping rope along the graveled path to the fountain. Quite distinctly, as clear as day, I saw her come, with what children call the dancing step, between the low box borders to the place where the daffodils bloomed by the fountain. From her straight brown hair to her frock of Scotch plaid and her little feet, which twinkled in white socks and black slippers over the turning rope, she was as real to me as the ground on which she trod or the laughing marble boys under the splashing water. Starting up from my chair, I made a single step to the terrace. If I could only reach her—only speak to her—I felt that I might at last solve the mystery. But with the first flutter of my dress on the terrace, the airy little form melted into the quiet dusk of the maze. Not a breath stirred the daffodils, not a shadow passed over the sparkling flow of the water; yet, weak and shaken in every nerve, I sat down on the brick step of the terrace and burst into tears. I must have known that something terrible would happen before they pulled down Mrs. Maradick’s home.

The doctor dined out that night. He was with the lady he was going to marry, the housekeeper told me; and it must have been almost midnight when I heard him come in and go upstairs to his room. I was downstairs because I had been unable to sleep, and the book I wanted to finish I had left that afternoon in the office. The book—I can’t remember what it was—had seemed to me very exciting when I began it in the morning; but after the visit of the child I found the romantic novel as dull as a treatise on nursing. It was impossible for me to follow the lines, and I was on

the point of giving up and going to bed, when Doctor Maradick opened the front door with his latch-key and went up the stair.

I was still sitting there when the telephone on my desk rang, with what seemed to my overwrought nerves a startling abruptness, and the voice of the superintendent told me hurriedly that Doctor Maradick was needed at the hospital. I had become so accustomed to these emergency calls in the night that I felt reassured when I had rung up the doctor in his room and had heard the hearty sound of his response. He had not yet undressed, he said, and would come down immediately while I ordered back his car, which must just have reached the garage.

"I'll be with you in five minutes!" he called as cheerfully as if I had summoned him to his wedding.

I heard him cross the floor of his room, and before he could reach the head of the staircase, I opened the door and went out into the hall in order that I might turn on the light and have his hat and coat waiting. The electric button was at the end of the hall, and as I moved towards it, guided by the glimmer that fell from the landing above, I lifted my eyes to the staircase, which climbed dimly, with its slender mahogany balustrade, as far as the third story. Then it was, at the very moment when the doctor, humming gayly, began his quick descent of the steps, that I distinctly saw—I will swear to this on my death-bed—a child's skipping-rope lying loosely coiled, as if it had dropped from a careless little hand, in the bend of the staircase. With a spring I had reached the electric button, flooding the hall with light; just as I did so, while my arm was still outstretched behind me, I heard the humming voice change to a cry of surprise or terror, and the figure on the staircase tripped heavily and stumbled with groping hands into emptiness.

The scream of warning died in my throat while I watched him pitch forward down the long flight of stairs to the floor at my feet. Even before I bent over him, before I wiped the blood from his brow and felt for his silent heart, I knew that he was dead.

Something—it may have been, as the world believes, a misstep in the dimness, or it may have been, as I am ready to bear witness, an invisible judgment—something had killed him at the very moment when he most wanted to live.

LUKUNDOO

BY EDWARD LUCAS WHITE

"It stands to reason," said Twombly, "that a man must accept the evidence of his own eyes, and when eyes and ears agree, there can be no doubt. He has to believe what he has both seen and heard."

"Not always," put in Singleton, softly.

Every man turned toward Singleton. Twombly was standing on the hearth-rug, his back to the grate, his legs spread out, with his habitual air of dominating the room. Singleton, as usual, was as much as possible effaced in a corner. But when Singleton spoke he said something. We faced him in that flattering spontaneity of expectant silence which invites utterance.

"I was thinking," he said, after an interval, "of something I both saw and heard in Africa."

Now, if there was one thing we had found impossible it had been to elicit from Singleton anything definite about his African experiences. As with the Alpinist in the story, who could tell only that he went up and came down, the sum of Singleton's revelations had been that he went there and came away. His words now riveted our attention at once. Twombly faded from the hearth-rug, but not one of us could ever recall having seen him go. The room re-adjusted itself, focused on Singleton, and there was some hasty and furtive lighting of fresh cigars. Singleton lit one also, but it went out immediately, and he never relit it.

From "Lukundoo and Other Stories," by Edward Lucas White, published by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc. Copyright 1906, 1925, 1927 by Edward Lucas White.

We were in the Great Forest, exploring for pigmies. Van Rieten had a theory that the dwarfs found by Stanley and others were a mere cross-breed between ordinary negroes and the real pigmies. He hoped to discover a race of men three feet tall at most, or shorter. We had found no trace of any such beings.

Natives were few; game scarce; food, except game, there was none; and the deepest, dankest, drippiest forest all about. We were the only novelty in the country, no native we met had even seen a white man before; most had never heard of white men. All of a sudden, late one afternoon, there came into our camp an Englishman, and pretty well used up he was, too. We had heard no rumor of him; he had not only heard of us but had made an amazing five-day march to reach us. His guide and two bearers were nearly as done up as he. Even though he was in tatters and had five days' beard on, you could see he was naturally dapper and neat and the sort of man to shave daily. He was small, but wiry. His face was the sort of British face from which emotion has been so carefully banished that a foreigner is apt to think the wearer of the face incapable of any sort of feeling; the kind of face which, if it has any expression at all, expresses principally the resolution to go through the world decorously, without annoying or intruding upon anyone.

His name was Etcham. He introduced himself modestly, and ate with us so deliberately that we should never have suspected, if our bearers had not had it from his bearer, that he had had but three meals in the five days, and those small. After we had lit up he told us why he had come.

"My chief is ve'y seedy," he said between puffs. "He is bound to go out if he keeps this way. I thought perhaps . . ."

He spoke quietly in a soft, even tone, but I could see little beads of sweat oozing out on his upper lip under his stubby mustache, and there was a tingle of repressed emotion in his tone, a veiled eagerness in his eye, a palpitating inward solicitude in his demeanor that moved me at once. Van Rieten had no sentiment in him; if he was moved he did not show it. But he listened. I was surprised at that. He was just the man to refuse at once. But he listened to Etcham's halting, diffident hints. He even asked questions.

"Who is your chief?"

"Stone," Etcham lisped.

That electrified both of us.

"Ralph Stone?" we ejaculated together.

Etcham nodded. For some minutes Van Rieten and I were silent. Van Rieten had never seen him, but I had been a classmate of Stone's, and Van Rieten and I had discussed him over many a camp-fire. We had heard of him two years before, south of Luebo in the Balunda country, which had been ringing with his theatrical strife against a Balunda witch-doctor, ending in the sorcerer's complete discomfiture and the abasement of his tribe before Stone. They had even broken the fetish-man's whistle and given Stone the pieces. It had been like the triumph of Elijah over the prophets of Baal, only more real to the Balunda.

We had thought of Stone as far off, if still in Africa at all, and here he turned up ahead of us and probably forestalling our quest.

Etcham's naming of Stone brought back to us all his tantalizing story, his fascinating parents, their tragic death; the brilliance of his college days; the dazzle of his millions; the promise of his young manhood; his wide notoriety, so nearly real fame; his romantic elopement with

the meteoric authoress whose sudden cascade of fiction had made her so great a name so young, whose beauty and charm were so much heralded; the frightful scandal of the breach-of-promise suit that followed; his bride's devotion through it all; their sudden quarrel after it was all over; their divorce; the too much advertised announcement of his approaching marriage to the plaintiff in the breach-of-promise suit; his precipitate remarriage to his divorced bride; their second quarrel and second divorce; his departure from his native land; his advent in the dark continent. The sense of all this rushed over me and I believe Van Rieten felt it, too, as he sat silent.

Then he asked:

"Where is Werner?"

"Dead," said Etcham. "He died before I joined Stone."

"You were not with Stone above Luebo?"

"No," said Etcham, "I joined him at Stanley Falls."

"Who is with him?" Van Rieten asked.

"Only his Zanzibar servants and the bearers," Etcham replied.

"What sort of bearers?" Van Rieten demanded.

"Mang-Battu men," Etcham responded simply.

Now that impressed both Van Rieten and myself greatly. It bore out Stone's reputation as a notable leader of men. For up to that time no one had been able to use Mang-Battu as bearers outside of their own country, or to hold them for long or difficult expeditions.

"Were you long among the Mang-Battu?" was Van Rieten's next question.

"Some weeks," said Etcham. "Stone was interested in them and made up a fair-sized vocabulary of their words and phrases. He had a theory that they are an offshoot of

the Balunda and he found much confirmation in their customs."

"What do you live on?" Van Rieten inquired.

"Game, mostly," Etcham lisped.

"How long has Stone been laid up?" Van Rieten next asked.

"More than a month," Etcham answered.

"And you have been hunting for the camp!" Van Rieten exclaimed.

Etcham's face, burnt and flayed as it was, showed a flush.

"I missed some easy shots," he admitted ruefully. "I've not felt ve'y fit myself."

"What's the matter with your chief?" Van Rieten inquired.

"Something like carbuncles," Etcham replied.

"He ought to get over a carbuncle or two," Van Rieten declared.

"They are not carbuncles," Etcham explained. "Nor one or two. He has had dozens, sometimes five at once. If they had been carbuncles he would have been dead long ago. But in some ways they are not so bad, though in others they are worse."

"How do you mean?" Van Rieten queried.

"Well," Etcham hesitated, "they do not seem to inflame so deep nor so wide as carbuncles, nor to be so painful, nor to cause so much fever. But then they seem to be part of a disease that affects his mind. He let me help him dress the first, but the others he has hidden most carefully from me and from the men. He keeps to his tent when they puff up, and will not let me change the dressings or be with him at all."

"Have you plenty of dressings?" Van Rieten asked.

"We have some," said Etcham doubtfully. "But he won't

use them; he washes out the dressings and uses them over and over."

"How is he treating the swellings?" Van Rieten inquired.

"He slices them off clear down to flesh level, with his razor."

"What?" Van Rieten shouted.

Etcham made no answer but looked him steadily in the eyes.

"I beg pardon," Van Rieten hastened to say. "You startled me. They can't be carbuncles. He'd have been dead long ago."

"I thought I had said they are not carbuncles," Etcham lisped.

"But the man must be crazy!" Van Rieten exclaimed.

"Just so," said Etcham. "He is beyond my advice or control."

"How many has he treated that way?" Van Rieten demanded.

"Two, to my knowledge," Etcham said.

"Two?" Van Rieten queried.

Etcham flushed again.

"I saw him," he confessed, "through a crack in the hut. I felt impelled to keep a watch on him, as if he was not responsible."

"I should think not," Van Rieten agreed. "And you saw him do that twice?"

"I conjecture," said Etcham, "that he did the like with all the rest."

"How many has he had?" Van Rieten asked.

"Dozens," Etcham lisped.

"Does he eat?" Van Rieten inquired.

"Like a wolf," said Etcham. "More than any two bearers."

"Can he walk?" Van Rieten asked.

"He crawls a bit, groaning," said Etcham simply.

"Little fever, you say," Van Rieten ruminated.

"Enough and too much," Etcham declared.

"Has he been delirious?" Van Rieten asked.

"Only twice," Etcham replied; "once when the first swelling broke, and once later. He would not let anyone come near him then. But we could hear him talking, talking steadily, and it scared the natives."

"Was he talking their patter in delirium?" Van Rieten demanded.

"No," said Etcham, "but he was talking some similar lingo. Hamed Burghash said he was talking Balunda. I know too little Balunda. I do not learn languages readily. Stone learned more Mang-Battu in a week than I should have learned in a year. But I seemed to hear words like Mang-Battu words. Anyhow the Mang-Battu bearers were scared."

"Scared?" Van Rieten repeated, questioningly.

"So were the Zanzibar men, even Hamed Burghash, and so was I," said Etcham, "only for a different reason. He talked in two voices."

"In two voices," Van Rieten reflected.

"Yes," said Etcham, more excitedly than he had yet spoken. "In two voices, like a conversation. One was his own, one a small, thin, bleaty voice like nothing I ever heard. I seemed to make out, among the sounds the deep voice made, something like Mang-Battu words I knew, as *nedru*, *metebaba*, and *nedo*, their terms for 'head', 'shoulder', 'thigh', and perhaps *kudra* and *nekere* ('speak' and 'whistle'); and among the noises of the shrill voice *matom-ipa*, *angunzi*, and *kamomami* ('kill', 'death', and 'hate').

Hamed Burghash said he also heard those words. He knew Mang-Battu far better than I."

"What did the bearers say?" Van Rieten asked.

"They said, '*Lukundoo, Lukundoo!*'" Etcham replied. "I did not know that word; Hamed Burghash said it was Mang-Battu for 'leopard'."

"It's Mang-Battu for 'conjuring'," said Van Rieten.

"I don't wonder they thought so," said Etcham. "It was enough to make one believe in enchantment to listen to those two voices."

"One voice answering the other?" Van Rieten asked perfunctorily.

Etcham's face went gray under his tan.

"Sometimes both at once," he answered huskily.

"Both at once!" Van Rieten ejaculated.

"It sounded that way to the men, too," said Etcham. "And that was not all."

He stopped and looked helplessly at us for a moment.

"Could a man talk and whistle at the same time?" he asked.

"How do you mean?" Van Rieten queried.

"We could hear Stone talking away, his big, deep-chested baritone rumbling along, and through it all we could hear a high, shrill whistle, the oddest, wheezy sound. You know, no matter how shrilly a grown man may whistle, the note has a different quality from the whistle of a boy or a woman or little girl. They sound more treble, somehow. Well, if you can imagine the smallest girl who could whistle keeping it up tunelessly right along, that whistle was like that, only even more piercing, and it sounded right through Stone's bass tones."

"And you didn't go to him?" Van Rieten cried.

"He is not given to threats," Etcham disclaimed. "But

he had threatened, not volubly, nor like a sick man, but quietly and firmly, that if any man of us (he lumped me in with the men) came near him while he was in his trouble, that man should die. And it was not so much his words as his manner. It was like a monarch commanding respected privacy for a death-bed. One simply could not transgress."

"I see," said Van Rieten shortly.

"He's ve'y seedy," Etcham repeated helplessly. "I thought perhaps . . ."

His absorbing affection for Stone, his real love for him, shone out through his envelope of conventional training. Worship of Stone was plainly his master passion.

Like many competent men, Van Rieten had a streak of hard selfishness in him. It came to the surface then. He said we carried our lives in our hands from day to day just as genuinely as Stone; that he did not forget the ties of blood and calling between any two explorers, but that there was no sense in imperiling one party for a very problematical benefit to a man probably beyond any help; that it was enough of a task to hunt for one party; that if two were united, providing food would be more than doubly difficult; that the risk of starvation was too great. Deflecting our march seven full days' journey (he complimented Etcham on his marching powers) might ruin our expedition entirely.

Van Rieten had logic on his side and he had a way with him. Etcham sat there apologetic and deferential, like a fourth-form schoolboy before a head master. Van Rieten wound up.

"I am after pigmies, at the risk of my life. After pigmies I go."

"Perhaps, then, these will interest you," said Etcham, very quietly.

He took two objects out of the sidepocket of his blouse, and handed them to Van Rieten. They were round, bigger than big plums, and smaller than small peaches, about the right size to enclose in an average hand. They were black, and at first I did not see what they were.

"Pigmies!" Van Rieten exclaimed. "Pigmies, indeed! Why, they wouldn't be two feet high! Do you mean to claim that these are adult heads?"

"I claim nothing," Etcham answered evenly. "You can see for yourself."

Van Rieten passed one of the heads to me. The sun was just setting and I examined it closely. A dried head it was, perfectly preserved, and the flesh as hard as Argentine jerked beef. A bit of a vertebra stuck out where the muscles of the vanished neck had shriveled into folds. The puny chin was sharp on a projecting jaw, the minute teeth white and even between the retracted lips, the tiny nose was flat, the little forehead retreating, there were considerable clumps of stunted wool on the Lilliputian cranium. There was nothing babyish, childish or youthful about the head, rather it was mature to senility.

"Where did these come from?" Van Rieten enquired.

"I do not know," Etcham replied precisely. "I found them among Stone's effects while rummaging for medicines or drugs or anything that could help me to help him. I do not know where he got them. But I'll swear he did not have them when we entered this district."

"Are you sure?" Van Rieten queried, his eyes big and fixed on Etcham's.

"Ve'y sure," lisped Etcham.

"But how could he have come by them without your knowledge?" Van Rieten demurred.

"Sometimes we were apart ten days at a time hunting,"

said Etcham. "Stone is not a talking man. He gave me no account of his doings and Hamed Burghash keeps a still tongue and a tight hold on the men."

"You have examined these heads?" Van Rieten asked.

"Minutely," said Etcham.

Van Rieten took out his notebook. He was a methodical chap. He tore out a leaf, folded it and divided it equally into three pieces. He gave one to me and one to Etcham.

"Just for a test of my impressions," he said, "I want each of us to write separately just what he is most reminded of by these heads. Then I want to compare the writings."

I handed Etcham a pencil and he wrote. Then he handed the pencil back to me and I wrote.

"Read the three," said Van Rieten, handing me his piece.

Van Rieten had written:

"An old Balunda witch-doctor."

Etcham had written:

"An old Mang-Battu fetish-man."

I had written:

"An old Katongo magician."

"There!" Van Rieten exclaimed. "Look at that! There is nothing Wagabi or Batwa or Wambuttu or Wabotu about these heads. Nor anything pigmy either."

"I thought as much," said Etcham.

"And you say he did not have them before?"

"To a certainty he did not," Etcham asserted.

"It is worth following up," said Van Rieten. "I'll go with you. And first of all, I'll do my best to save Stone."

He put out his hand and Etcham clasped it silently. He was grateful all over.

Nothing but Etcham's fever of solicitude could have taken him in five days over the track. It took him eight

days to retrace with full knowledge of it and our party to help. We could not have done it in seven, and Etcham urged us on, in a repressed fury of anxiety, no mere fever of duty to his chief, but a real ardor of devotion, a glow of personal adoration for Stone which blazed under his dry conventional exterior and showed in spite of him.

We found Stone well cared for. Etcham had seen to a good, high thorn *zdreeba* round the camp, the huts were well built and thatched and Stone's was as good as their resources would permit. Hamed Burghash was not named after two Seyyids for nothing. He had in him the making of a sultan. He had kept the Mang-Battu together, not a man had slipped off, and he had kept them in order. Also he was a deft nurse and a faithful servant.

The two other Zanzabaris had done some creditable hunting. Though all were hungry, the camp was far from starvation.

Stone was on a canvas cot and there was a sort of collapsible camp-stool-table, like a Turkish tabouret, by the cot. It had a water-bottle and some vials on it and Stone's watch, also his razor in its case.

Stone was clean and not emaciated, but he was far gone; not unconscious, but in a daze; past commanding or resisting anyone. He did not seem to see us enter or to know we were there. I should have recognized him anywhere. His boyish dash and grace had vanished utterly, of course. But his head had grown more leonine; his hair was still abundant, yellow and wavy; the close, crisped blond beard he had grown during his illness did not alter him. He was big and big-chested yet. His eyes were dull and he mumbled and babbled mere meaningless syllables, not words.

Etcham helped Van Rieten to uncover him and look him over. He was in good muscle for a man so long bedridden.

There were no scars on him except about his knees, shoulders and chest. On each knee and above it he had a full score of roundish cicatrices, and a dozen or more on each shoulder, all in front. Two or three were open wounds and four or five barely healed. He had no fresh swellings except two, one on each side, on his pectoral muscles, the one on the left being higher up and farther out than the other. They did not look like boils or carbuncles, but as if something blunt and hard were being pushed up through the fairly healthy flesh and skin, not much inflamed.

“I should not lance those,” said Van Rieten, and Etcham assented.

They made Stone as comfortable as they could, and just before sunset we looked in at him again. He was lying on his back, and his chest showed big and massive yet, but he lay as if in a stupor. We left Etcham with him and went into the next hut, which Etcham had resigned to us. The jungle noises were no different there than anywhere else for months past, and I was soon fast asleep.

Sometime in the pitch dark I found myself awake and listening. I could hear two voices, one Stone’s, the other sibilant and wheezy. I knew Stone’s voice after all the years that had passed since I heard it last. The other was like nothing I remembered. It had less volume than the wail of a new-born baby, yet there was an insistent carrying power to it, like the shrilling of an insect. As I listened I heard Van Rieten breathing near me in the dark, then he heard me and realized that I was listening, too. Like Etcham I knew little Balunda, but I could make out a word or two. The voices alternated with intervals of silence between.

Then suddenly both sounded at once and fast, Stone’s

baritone basso, full as if he were in perfect health, and that incredible stridulous falsetto, both jabbering at once like the voices of two people quarreling and trying to talk each other down.

"I can't stand this," said Van Rieten. "Let's have a look at him."

He had one of those cylindrical electric night-candles. He fumbled about for it, touched the button and beckoned me to come with him. Outside of the hut he motioned me to stand still, and instinctively turned off the light, as if seeing made listening difficult.

Except for a faint glow from the embers of the bearers' fire we were in complete darkness, little starlight struggled through the trees, the river made but a faint murmur. We could hear the two voices together and then suddenly the creaking voice changed into a razor-edged, slicing whistle, indescribably cutting, continuing right through Stone's grumbling torrent of croaking words.

"Good God!" exclaimed Van Rieten.

Abruptly he turned on the light.

We found Etcham utterly asleep, exhausted by his long anxiety and the exertions of his phenomenal march and relaxed completely now that the load was in a sense shifted from his shoulders to Van Rieten's. Even the light on his face did not wake him.

The whistle had ceased and the two voices now sounded together. Both came from Stone's cot, where the concentrated white ray showed him lying just as we had left him, except that he had tossed his arms above his head and had torn the coverings and bandages from his chest.

The swelling on his right breast had broken. Van Rieten aimed the center line of the light at it and we saw it plainly. From his flesh, grown out of it, there protruded a head,

such a head as the dried specimens Etcham had shown us, as if it were a miniature of the head of a Balunda fetish-man. It was black, shining black as the blackest African skin; it rolled the whites of its wicked, wee eyes and showed its microscopic teeth between lips repulsively negroid in their red fullness, even in so diminutive a face. It had crisp, fuzzy wool on its manikin skull, it turned malignantly from side to side and chattered incessantly in that inconceivable falsetto. Stone babbled brokenly against its patter.

Van Rieten turned from Stone and waked Etcham, with some difficulty. When he was awake and saw it all, Etcham stared and said not one word.

"You saw him slice off two swellings?" Van Rieten asked. Etcham nodded, choking.

"Did he bleed much?" Van Rieten demanded.

"Ve'y little," Etcham replied.

"You hold his arms," said Van Rieten to Etcham.

He took up Stone's razor and handed me the light. Stone showed no sign of seeing the light or of knowing we were there. But the little head mewled and screeched at us.

Van Rieten's hand was steady, and the sweep of the razor even and true. Stone bled amazingly little and Van Rieten dressed the wound as if it had been a bruise or scrape.

Stone had stopped talking the instant the excrescent head was severed. Van Rieten did all that could be done for Stone and then fairly grabbed the light from me. Snatching up a gun he scanned the ground by the cot and brought the butt down once and twice, viciously.

We went back to our hut, but I doubt if I slept.

Next day, near noon, in broad daylight, we heard the two voices from Stone's hut. We found Etcham dropped asleep by his charge. The swelling on the left had broken,

and just such another head was there miauling and spluttering. Etcham woke up and the three of us stood there and glared. Stone interjected hoarse vocables into the tinkling gurgle of the portent's utterance.

Van Rieten stepped forward, took up Stone's razor and knelt down by the cot. The atomy of a head squealed a wheezy snarl at him.

Then suddenly Stone spoke English.

"Who are you with my razor?"

Van Rieten started back and stood up.

Stone's eyes were clear now and bright; they roved about the hut.

"The end," he said; "I recognize the end. I seem to see Etcham, as if in life. But Singleton! Ah, Singleton! Ghosts of my boyhood come to watch me pass! And you, strange specter with the black beard, and my razor! Aroint ye all!"

"I'm no ghost, Stone," I managed to say. "I'm alive. So are Etcham and Van Rieten. We are here to help you."

"Van Rieten!" he exclaimed. "My work passes on to a better man. Luck go with you, Van Rieten."

Van Rieten went nearer to him.

"Just hold still a moment, old man," he said soothingly. "It will only be one twinge."

"I've held still for many such twinges," Stone answered quite distinctly. "Let me be. Let me die my own way. The hydra was nothing to this. You can cut off ten, a hundred, a thousand heads, but the curse you cannot cut off, or take off. What's soaked into the bone won't come out of the flesh, any more than what's bred there. Don't hack me any more. Promise!"

His voice had all the old commanding tone of his boyhood and it swayed Van Rieten as it always had swayed everybody.

"I promise," said Van Rieten.

Almost as he said the word Stone's eyes filmed again.

Then we three sat about Stone and watched that hideous, gibbering prodigy grow up out of Stone's flesh, till two horrid, spindling little black arms disengaged themselves. The infinitesimal nails were perfect to the barely perceptible moon at the quick, the pink spot on the palm was horridly natural. These arms gesticulated and the right plucked toward Stone's blond beard.

"I can't stand this," Van Rieten exclaimed and took up the razor again.

Instantly Stone's eyes opened, hard and glittering.

"Van Rieten break his word?" he enunciated slowly. "Never!"

"But we must help you," Van Rieten gasped.

"I am past all help and all hurting," said Stone. "This is my hour. This curse is not put on me; it grew out of me, like this horror here. Even now I go."

His eyes closed and we stood helpless, the adherent figure spouting shrill sentences.

In a moment Stone spoke again.

"You speak all tongues?" he asked thickly.

And the emergent manikin replied in sudden English:

"Yea, verily, all that you speak," putting out its microscopic tongue, writhing its lips and wagging its head from side to side. We could see the thready ribs on its exiguous flanks heave as if the thing breathed.

"Has she forgiven me?" Stone asked in a muffled strangle.

"Not while the moss hangs from the cypresses," the head squeaked. "Not while the stars shine on Lake Pontchartrain will she forgive."

And then Stone, all with one motion, wrenched himself over on his side. The next instant he was dead.

When Singleton's voice ceased the room was hushed for a space. We could hear each other breathing. Twombly, the tactless, broke the silence.

"I presume," he said, "you cut off the little manikin and brought it home in alcohol."

Singleton turned on him a stern countenance.

"We buried Stone," he said, "unmutilated as he died."

"But," said the unconscionable Twombly, "the whole thing is incredible."

Singleton stiffened.

"I did not expect you to believe it," he said; "I began by saying that although I heard and saw it, when I look back on it I cannot credit it myself."

RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

A YOUNG man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his *Inferno*. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heartbreak natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

“Holy Virgin, signor!” cried old Dame Lisabetta, who, won by the youth’s remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavoring to give the chamber a habitable air, “what a sigh was that to come out of a young man’s heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples.”

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Paduan sun-

shine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants, which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

“Does this garden belong to the house?” asked Giovanni.

“Heaven forbid, signor, unless it were fruitful of better pot herbs than any that grow there now,” answered old Lisabetta. “No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor, who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he distills these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the signor doctor at work, and perchance the signora, his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden.”

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber; and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain in the center, sculptured with rare art, but so wofully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window and made him feel as if the fountain were an immortal spirit, that sung its song unceasingly and without heeding the vicissitudes around it, while one century embodied it in marble and another scattered the perishable garniture on

the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided grew various plants that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and, in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the luster and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care, as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden pots; some crept serpent-like along the ground or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself around a statue of Ver-tumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drape-ry of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path: it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost na-

ture, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of this deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch or the direct inhaling of their odors with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably; for the man's demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits, which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow,—was he the Adam?

The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice; but, finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease,—

“Beatrice! Beatrice!”

“Here am I, my father. What would you?” cried a rich and youthful voice from a window of the opposite house—

a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson and of perfumes heavily delectable. "Are you in the garden?"

"Yes, Beatrice," answered the gardener; "and I need your help."

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone. Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown morbid while he looked down into the garden; for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they, more beautiful than the richest of them, but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden path, it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants which her father had most sedulously avoided.

"Here, Beatrice," said the latter, "see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned to your sole charge."

"And gladly will I undertake it," cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent towards the magnificent plant and opened her arms as if to embrace it. "Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse

and serve thee; and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfumed breath, which to her is as the breath of life."

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes, and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower, or one sister performing the duties of affection to another. The scene soon terminated. Whether Dr. Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants and steal upward past the open window; and Giovanni, closing the lattice, went to his couch and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement, on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised, and a little ashamed, to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun which gilded the dewdrops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced that, in the heart of the barren city, he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation.

It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language to keep him in communion with Nature. Neither the sickly and thoughtworn Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both was due to their own qualities and how much to his wonder-working fancy; but he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter.

In the course of the day he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the university, a physician of eminent repute, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature and habits that might almost be called jovial. He kept the young man to dinner, and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Dr. Rappaccini. But the professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

“Ill would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine,” said Professor Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, “to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini; but, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Dr. Rappaccini has as much science as

any member of the faculty—with perhaps one single exception—in Padua, or all Italy; but there are certain grave objections to his professional character.”

“And what are they?” asked the young man.

“Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?” said the professor, with a smile. “But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects of some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge.”

“Methinks he is an awful man indeed,” remarked Guasconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. “And yet, worshipful professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?”

“God forbid,” answered the professor, somewhat testily; “at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison, more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world withal. That the signor doctor does less mischief than might be expected with such dangerous substances is undeniable. Now and then, it must be owned, he has effected, or seemed to effect, a marvelous cure; but, to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success—they being

probably the work of chance—but should be held strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work.”

The youth might have taken Baglioni's opinions with many grains of allowance had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Dr. Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

“I know not, most learned professor,” returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini's exclusive zeal for science—“I know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter.”

“Aha!” cried the professor, with a laugh. “So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine! Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of lachryma.”

Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Dr. Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist's, he bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowledgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depth of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however—as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case—a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal, and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their various perfumes as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable that lived upon sweet odors. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it; so brilliant, so vivid, was its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness—qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain—a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub, she threw open her arms, as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace—so intimate that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

“Give me thy breath, my sister,” exclaimed Beatrice, “for I am faint with common air. And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem and place close beside my heart.”

With these words the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's drafts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange-colored reptile, of a lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni—but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute—it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

“Am I awake? Have I my senses?” said he to himself. “What is this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or impressibly terrible?”

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window, so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall: it had, perhaps, wandered through the city, and found no flowers or verdure among those antique haunts of men until the heavy perfumes of Dr. Rappaccini's shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers, this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now, here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti's eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that, while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet! its bright wings shivered; it was dead—from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man—rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features, and a glistening of gold among his ringlets—gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in mid air. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

“Signora,” said he, “there are pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti.”

“Thanks, signor,” replied Beatrice, with her rich voice, that came forth as it were like a gush of music, and with a mirthful expression half childish and half womanlike. “I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but, if I toss it into the air, it will

not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then, as if inwardly ashamed of having stepped aside from her maiden reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But, few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni, when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance.

For many days after this incident the young man avoided the window that looked into Dr. Rappaccini's garden, as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eyesight had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings and Padua itself at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself, as far as possible, to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice—thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, ought Giovanni to have remained so near this extraordinary being that the proximity and possibility even of intercourse should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti had not a deep heart—or, at all events, its depths were not sounded now; but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperament, which rose every instant to a higher fever pitch. Whether or no Beatrice pos-

sessed those terrible attributes, that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua or beyond its gates: his footsteps kept time with the throbbing of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day he found himself arrested; his arm was seized by a portly personage, who had turned back on recognizing the young man and expended much breath in overtaking him.

“Signor Giovanni! Stay, my young friend!” cried he. “Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case if I were as much altered as yourself.”

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided ever since the first meeting, from a doubt that the professor’s sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one and spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes; I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!"

"Not yet, not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the professor, smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. "What! did I grow up side by side with your father? and shall his son pass me like a stranger in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Speedily, then, most worshipful professor, speedily," said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. "Does not your worship see that I am in haste?"

Now, while he was speaking there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly like a person in inferior health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human, interest in the young man.

"It is Dr. Rappaccini!" whispered the professor when the stranger has passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

"He *has* seen you! he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, hastily. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the

same that coldly illuminates his face as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of a flower; a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature's warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments!"

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni, passionately. "*That*, signor professor, were an untoward experiment."

"Patience! patience!" replied the imperturbable professor. "I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice—what part does she act in this mystery?"

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni's pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!"

Meanwhile Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention; vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily subsided into a cold and dull vacuity.

He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore, laid her grasp upon his cloak.

"Signor! signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by centuries. "Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life. "A private entrance into Dr. Rappaccini's garden?"

"Hush! hush! not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. "Yes; into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be admitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold in her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baglioni, crossed his mind, that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the professor seemed to suppose that Dr. Rappaccini was involving him. But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him. The instant that he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so. It mattered not whether she were angel or demon; he was irrevocably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward, in everlasting circles, toward a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow; and yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory; whether it were really of so

deep and positive a nature as to justify him in thrusting himself into an incalculable position; whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly or not at all connected with his heart.

He paused, hesitated, turned half about, but again went on. His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door, through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves, with the broken sunshine glimmering among them. Giovanni stepped forth, and, forcing himself through the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its tendrils over the hidden entrance, stood beneath his own window in the open area of Dr. Rappaccini's garden.

How often is it the case that, when impossibilities have come to pass and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance. So was it now with Giovanni. Day after day his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her, face to face, in this very garden, basking in the Oriental sunshine of her beauty, and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence. But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and, perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants.

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him, their

gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several also would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which in one or two cases had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden. In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and, turning, beheld Beatrice emerging from beneath the sculptured portal.

Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment; whether he should apologize for his intrusion into the garden, or assume that he was there with the privy at least, if not by the desire, of Dr. Rappaccini or his daughter; but Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, signor," said Beatrice, with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window. "It is no marvel, therefore, if the sight

of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs; for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady," observed Giovanni, "if fame say true—you likewise are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms and these spicy perfumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than if taught by Signor Rappaccini himself."

"Are there such idle rumors?" asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me when they meet my eye. But pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes."

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" asked Giovanni, pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink. "No, signora; you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him. There came a deep flush to her cheek; but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queenlike haughtiness.

"I do so bid you, signor," she replied. "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the out-

ward senses, still it may be false in its essence; but the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe."

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect and beamed upon Giovanni's consciousness like the light of truth itself; but while she spoke there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her, rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs. It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice's breath which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart? A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni and flitted away; he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear.

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice's manner vanished; she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight of summer clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters—questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant. Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight and wondering at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom. There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gemlike brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies

sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon there gleamed across the young man's mind a sense of wonder that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination, whom he had idealized in such hues of terror, in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes—that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother, and should find her so human and so maidenlike. But such reflections were only momentary; the effect of her character was too real not to make itself familiar at once.

In this free intercourse they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the shattered fountain, beside which grew the magnificent shrub, with its treasury of glowing blossoms. A fragrance was diffused from it which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully.

“For the first time in my life,” murmured she, addressing the shrub, “I had forgotten thee.”

“I remember, signora,” said Giovanni, “that you once promised to reward me with one of these living gems for the bouquet which I had the happy boldness to fling to your feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview.”

He made a step toward the shrub with extended hand; but Beatrice darted forward, uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibers.

“Touch it not!” exclaimed she, in a voice of agony. “Not for thy life! It is fatal!”

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him and vanished beneath the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Dr. Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings, invested with all the witchery that had been gathered around it ever since his first glimpse of her, and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human; her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshiped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system were now either forgotten or by the subtle sophistry of passion transmuted into a golden crown of enchantment, rendering Beatrice the more admirable by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half ideas which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness. Thus did he spend the night, nor fell asleep until the dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Dr. Rappaccini's garden, whither Giovanni's dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season, and, flinging his beams upon the young man's eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain. When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in his hand—in his right hand—the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own when he was on the point of plucking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple

print like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist.

Oh, how stubbornly does love—or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart—how stubbornly does it hold its faith until the moment comes when it is doomed to vanish into thin mist! Giovanni wrapped a handkerchief about his hand and wondered what evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate. A third; a fourth; and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an incident in Giovanni's daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live; for the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been playmates from early infancy—as if they were such playmates still. If, by any unwonted chance, he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window and sent up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber and echo and reverberate throughout his heart: "Giovanni! Giovanni! Why tarriest thou? Come down!" And down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But, with all this intimate familiarity, there was still a reserve in Beatrice's demeanor, so rigidly and invariably sustained that the idea of infringing it scarcely occurred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs, they loved; they had looked love with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way; they had

even spoken love in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated breath like tongues of long-hidden flame; and yet there had been no seal of lips, no clasp of hands, nor any slight caress such as love claims and hallows. He had never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a breeze. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At such times he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of the caverns of his heart and stared him in the face; his love grew thin and faint as the morning mist; his doubts alone had substance. But, when Beatrice's face brightened again after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the mysterious, questionable being whom he had watched with so much awe and horror; she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl whom he felt that his spirit knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up as he had long been to a pervading excitement, he could tolerate no companions except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly for a few moments about

the gossip of the city and the university, and then took up another topic.

"I have been reading an old classic author lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an Indian prince, who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn and gorgeous as the sunset; but what especially distinguished her was a certain rich perfume in her breath—richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger; but a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her."

"And what was that?" asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the professor.

"That this lovely woman," continued Baglioni, with emphasis, "had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison—her embrace death. Is not this a marvelous tale?"

"A childish fable," answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. "I marvel how your worship finds time to read such nonsense among your grave studies."

"By the by," said the professor, looking uneasily about him, "what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious; and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, methinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower; but I see no flowers in the chamber."

"Nor are there any," replied Giovanni, who had turned

pale as the professor spoke; "nor, I think, is there any fragrance except in your worship's imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume, the bare idea of it, may easily be mistaken for a present reality."

"Ay; but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks," said Baglioni, "and, were I to fancy any kind of odor, it would be that of some vile apothecary drug, wherewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with draughts as sweet as a maiden's breath; but woe to him that sips them!"

Giovanni's face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul; and yet the intimation of a view of her character, opposite to his own, gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions, which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover's perfect faith.

"Signor professor," said he, "you were my father's friend; perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part towards his son. I would fain feel nothing towards you save respect and deference; but I pray you to observe, signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice. You cannot, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word."

"Giovanni! my poor Giovanni!" answered the professor, with a calm expression of pity, "I know this wretched girl

far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisonous Rappaccini and his poisonous daughter; yes, poisonous as she is beautiful. Listen; for, even should you do violence to my gray hairs, it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini and in the person of the lovely Beatrice."

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

"Her father," continued Baglioni, "was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child in this horrible manner as the victim of his insane zeal for science; for, let us do him justice, he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death; perhaps a fate more awful still. Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing."

"It is a dream," muttered Giovanni to himself; "surely it is a dream."

"But," resumed the professor, "be of good cheer, son of my friend. It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous. Doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase, and the precious liquid within it, on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result."

Baglioni laid a small, exquisitely wrought silver vial on the table and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man's mind.

"We will thwart Rappaccini yet," thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs; "but, let us confess the truth of him, he is a wonderful man—a wonderful man indeed; a vile empiric, however, in his practice, and therefore not to be tolerated by those who respect the good old rules of the medical profession."

Throughout Giovanni's whole acquaintance with Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character; yet so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate, and guileless creature, that the image now held by Professor Baglioni looked as strange and incredible as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with his first glimpses of the beautiful girl; he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air, by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger. On such better evidence had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But now his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down, groveling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of

Beatrice's image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him, once for all, whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers; but if he could witness, at the distance of a few paces, the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea he hastened to the florist's and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dewdrops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden, Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror—a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to himself that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such a vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life.

“At least,” thought he, “her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower to perish in her grasp.”

With that thought he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame on perceiving that those dewy flowers were already beginning to droop; they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there as at the likeness of something frightful. He remem-

bered Baglioni's remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he shuddered—shuddered at himself. Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch with curious eyes a spider that was busily at work hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and recrossing the artful system of interwoven lines—as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent toward the insect, and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil; the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artisan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer, and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart: he knew not whether he were wicked, or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive gripe with his limbs and hung dead across the window.

“Accursed! accursed!” muttered Giovanni, addressing himself. “Hast thou grown so poisonous that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?”

At that moment a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden.

“Giovanni! Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why tarriest thou? Come down!”

“Yes,” muttered Giovanni again. “She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!”

He rushed down, and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance; but with her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off; recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm;

recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni's rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain and to its pool of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gemlike blossoms. Giovanni was affrighted at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

“Beatrice,” asked he, abruptly, “whence came this shrub?”

“My father created it,” answered she, with simplicity.

“Created it! created it!” repeated Giovanni. “What mean you, Beatrice?”

“He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of Nature,” replied Beatrice; “and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not!” continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub. “It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni—I grew up and blossomed with the plant and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with

a human affection; for, alas!—hast thou not suspected it?—there was an awful doom.”

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her, and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

“There was an awful doom,” she continued, “the effect of my father’s fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, oh, how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!”

“Was it a hard doom?” asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

“Only of late have I known how hard it was,” answered she, tenderly. “O, yes; but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet.”

Giovanni’s rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning flash out of a dark cloud.

“Accursed one!” cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. “And, finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!”

“Giovanni!” exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunderstruck.

“Yes, poisonous thing!” repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. “Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world’s wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now, if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred and so die!”

“What has befallen me?” murmured Beatrice, with a

low moan out of her heart. "Holy Virgin, pity me, a poor heart-broken child!"

"Thou,—dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the most fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers, as they come from thy lips, taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to church and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal! They that come after us will perish as by a pestilence! Let us sign crosses in the air! It will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols!"

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me. But thou,—what hast thou to do, save with one other shudder at my hideous misery, to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! this power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini."

There was a swarm of summer insects flitting through the air in search of the food promised by the flower odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni's head, and were evidently attracted towards him by the same influence which had drawn them for an instant within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father's fatal science! No, no, Giovanni; it was not I! Never! never! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart; for, Giovanni, believe it, though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and

craves love as its daily food. But my father,—he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes; spurn me, tread upon me, kill me! Oh, what is death after such words as thine? But it was not I. Not for a world of bliss would I have done it.”

Giovanni's passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice, the redeemed Beatrice, by the hand? Oh, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible, after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words! No, no; there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily, with that broken heart, across the borders of Time—she must bathe her hurts in some fount of paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality, and *there* be well.

But Giovanni did not know it.

“Dear Beatrice,” said he, approaching her, while she shrank away as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse, “dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! there is a medicine, potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?”

“Give it me!” said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver vial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added, with a peculiar emphasis, “I will drink; but do thou wait the result.”

She put Baglioni’s antidote to her lips; and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portals and came slowly toward the marble fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or a group of statuary and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused; his bent form grew erect with conscious power; he spread out his hands over them in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children; but those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives. Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

“My daughter,” said Rappaccini, “thou art no longer lonely in the world. Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub and bid thy bridegroom wear it on his bosom. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides!”

“My father,” said Beatrice, feebly—and still as she spoke she kept her hand upon her heart—“wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?”

“Miserable!” exclaimed Rappaccini. “What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvelous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy—misery, to be able to quell the mightiest

with a breath—misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?”

“I would fain have been loved, not feared,” murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. “But now it matters not. I am going, father, where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream—like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart; but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?”

To Beatrice—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death; and thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at that moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunderstricken man of science,—

“Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is *this* the upshot of your experiment?”

LAZARUS

BY LEONID ANDREYEFF

WHEN Lazarus left the grave, where for three days and three nights he had been under the enigmatical sway of death, and returned alive to his dwelling, for a time no one noticed in him those sinister things which made his name a terror as time went on. Gladdened by the sight of him who had been returned to life, those near to him made much of him, and satisfied their burning desire to serve him, in solicitude for his food and drink and garments. They dressed him gorgeously, and when, like a bridegroom in his bridal clothes, he sat again among them at the table and ate and drank, they wept with tenderness. And they summoned the neighbors to look at him who had risen miraculously from the dead. These came and shared the joy of the hosts. Strangers from far-off towns and hamlets came and adored the miracle in tempestuous words. The house of Mary and Martha was like a beehive.

Whatever was found new in Lazarus' face and gestures was thought to be some trace of a grave illness and of the shocks recently experienced. Evidently the destruction wrought by death on the corpse was only arrested by the miraculous power, but its effects were still apparent; and what death had succeeded in doing with Lazarus' face and body was like an artist's unfinished sketch seen under thin glass. On Lazarus' temples, under his eyes, and in the hollows of his cheeks, lay a deep and cadaverous blueness; cadaverously blue also were his long fingers, and around his finger-

nails, grown long in the grave, the blue had become purple and dark. On his lips, swollen in the grave, the skin had burst in places, and thin reddish cracks were formed, shining as though covered with transparent mica. And he had grown stout. His body, puffed up in the grave, retained its monstrous size and showed those frightful swellings in which one sensed the presence of the rank liquid of decomposition. But the heavy corpselike odor which penetrated Lazarus' grave-clothes and, it seemed, his very body, soon entirely disappeared, the blue spots on his face and hands grew paler, and the reddish cracks closed up, although they never disappeared altogether. That is how Lazarus looked when he appeared before people, in his second life, but his face looked natural to those who had seen him in the coffin.

In addition to the changes in his appearance, Lazarus' temper seemed to have undergone a transformation, but this circumstance startled no one and attracted no attention. Before his death Lazarus had always been cheerful and carefree, fond of laughter and a merry joke. It was because of this brightness and cheerfulness, with not a touch of malice and darkness, that the Master had grown so fond of him. But now Lazarus had grown grave and taciturn; he never jested, nor responded with laughter to other people's jokes; and the words which he very infrequently uttered were the plainest, most ordinary and necessary words, as deprived of depth and significance as those sounds with which animals express pain and pleasure, thirst and hunger. They were the words that one can say all one's life, and yet give no indication of what pains and gladdens the depths of the soul.

Thus, with the face of a corpse which for three days had been under the heavy sway of death, dark and taciturn, already appallingly transformed—but still unrecognized by any one in his new self—he was sitting at the feast-table

among friends and relatives, and his gorgeous nuptial garments glittered with yellow gold and bloody scarlet. Broad waves of jubilation, now soft, now tempestuously sonorous, surged around him; warm glances of love were reaching out for his face, still cold with the coldness of the grave; and a friend's warm palm caressed his blue, heavy hand. Music played—the tympanum and the pipe, the cithara and the harp. It was as though bees hummed, grasshoppers chirped and birds warbled over the happy house of Mary and Martha.

One of the guests incautiously lifted the veil. By a thoughtless word he broke the serene charm and uncovered the truth in all its naked ugliness. Ere the thought formed itself in his mind, his lips uttered with a smile: “Why do you not tell us what happened yonder?”

All grew silent, startled by the question. It was as if it occurred to them only now that for three days Lazarus had been dead, and they looked at him, anxiously awaiting his answer. But Lazarus kept silence.

“You do not wish to tell us,” wondered the man; “is it so terrible yonder?”

And again his thought came after his words. Had it been otherwise, he would not have asked this question, which at that very moment oppressed his heart with its insufferable horror. Uneasiness seized all present, and with a feeling of heavy weariness they awaited Lazarus' words, but he was sternly and coldly silent, and his eyes were lowered. As if for the first time, they noticed the frightful blueness of his face and his repulsive obesity. On the table, as if forgotten by Lazarus, rested his bluish-purple wrist, and to this all eyes turned, as if it were from it that the awaited answer was to come. The musicians were still playing, but now the

silence reached them too, and even as water extinguishes scattered embers, so were their merry tunes extinguished in the silence. The pipe grew silent; the voices of the sonorous tympanum and the murmuring harp died away; and as if the strings had burst, the cithara answered with a tremulous, broken note. Silence.

“You do not wish to say?” repeated the guest, unable to check his chattering tongue. But the stillness remained unbroken, and the bluish-purple hand rested motionless. And then he stirred slightly and everyone felt relieved. He lifted up his eyes, and lo! straightway embracing everything in one heavy glance, fraught with weariness and horror, he looked at them—Lazarus who had arisen from the dead.

It was the third day since Lazarus had left the grave. Since then many had experienced the pernicious power of his eye, but neither those who were crushed by it forever nor those who found the strength to resist in it the primordial sources of life, which is as mysterious as death, could explain the horror which lay motionless in the depth of his black pupils. Lazarus looked calmly and simply with no desire to conceal anything, but also with no intention to say anything; he looked coldly, as one who is infinitely indifferent to those alive. Many carefree people came close to him without noticing him, and only later did they learn with astonishment and fear who that calm stout man was that walked slowly by, almost touching them with his gorgeous and dazzling garments. The sun did not cease shining, when he was looking, nor did the fountain hush its murmur, and the sky overhead remained cloudless and blue. But the man under the spell of his enigmatical look heard no more the fountain and saw not the sky overhead. Sometimes he wept bitterly, sometimes he tore his hair and in frenzy called for help; but more often it came to pass that apathetically and

quietly he began to die, and so he languished many years, before everybody's eyes, wasted away, colorless, flabby, dull, like a tree silently drying up in a stony soil. And of those who gazed at him, the one who wept madly sometimes felt again the stir of life; the others never.

"So you do not wish to tell us what you have seen yonder?" repeated the man. But now his voice was impassive and dull, and deadly gray weariness showed in Lazarus' eyes. And deadly gray weariness covered like dust all the faces, and with dull amazement the guests stared at each other and did not understand wherefore they had gathered here and sat at the rich table. The talk ceased. They thought it was time to go home, but could not overcome the weariness which glued their muscles, and they kept on sitting there, yet apart and torn away from each other, like pale fires scattered over a dark field.

But the musicians were paid to play, and again they took their instruments, and again tunes full of studied mirth and studied sorrow began to flow and to rise. They unfolded the customary melody, but the guests harkened in dull amazement. Already they knew not why it is necessary, and why it is well, that people should pluck strings, inflate their cheeks, blow in thin pipes, and produce a bizarre, many-voiced noise.

"What bad music!" said someone.

The musicians took offense and left. Following them, the guests left one after another, for night was already come. And when placid darkness encircled them and they began to breathe with more ease, suddenly Lazarus' image loomed up before each one in formidable radiance, the blue face of a corpse, grave-clothes gorgeous and resplendent, a cold look, in the depths of which lay motionless an unknown horror. As though petrified, they were standing far apart, and

darkness enveloped them, but in the darkness blazed brighter and brighter the supernatural vision of him who for three days had been under the enigmatical sway of death. For three days had he been dead: thrice had the sun risen and set, but he had been dead; children had played, streams murmured over pebbles, the wayfarer had lifted up hot dust in the highroad, but he had been dead. And now he is again among them, touches them, looks at them, and through the black disks of his pupils, as through darkened glass, stares the unknowable Yonder.

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No one was taking care of Lazarus, for no friends, no relatives were left to him, and the great desert, which encircled the holy city, came near the very threshold of his dwelling. And the desert entered his house, and stretched on his couch, like a wife, and extinguished the fires. No one was taking care of Lazarus. One after the other, his sisters—Mary and Martha—forsook him. For a long while Martha was loath to abandon him, for she knew not who would feed him and pity him. She wept and prayed. But one night, when the wind was roaming in the desert and with a hissing sound the cypresses were bending over the roof, she dressed noiselessly, and secretly left the house. Lazarus probably heard the door slam; it banged against the side-post under the gusts of the desert wind, but he did not rise to go out and look at her that was abandoning him. All the night long the cypresses hissed over his head and plaintively thumped the door, letting in the cold, greedy desert.

Like a leper he was shunned by everyone, and it was proposed to tie a bell to his neck, as is done with lepers, to warn people against sudden meetings. But someone remarked, growing frightfully pale, that it would be too horrible if by

night the moaning of Lazarus' bell were suddenly heard under the windows, and so the project was abandoned.

And since he did not take care of himself, he would probably have starved to death, had not the neighbors brought him food in fear of something that they sensed but vaguely. The food was brought to him by children; they were not afraid of Lazarus, nor did they mock him with naïve cruelty, as children are wont to do with the wretched and miserable. They were indifferent to him and Lazarus answered them with the same coldness; he had no desire to caress the black little curls, and to look into their innocent shining eyes. Given to Time and to the desert, his house was crumbling down, and long since had his famishing goats wandered away to the neighboring pastures. His bridal garments became threadbare. Ever since that happy day when the musicians played, he had worn them unaware of the difference of the new and the worn. The bright colors grew dull and faded; vicious dogs and the sharp thorns of the desert turned the tender fabric into rags.

By day, when the merciless sun slew all things alive and even scorpions sought shelter under stones and writhed there in a mad desire to sting, he sat motionless under the sun's rays, his blue face and the uncouth, bushy beard lifted up, bathing in the fiery flood.

When people still talked to him, he was once asked: "Poor Lazarus, does it please you to sit thus and to stare at the sun?"

And he had answered: "Yes, it does."

So strong, it seemed, was the cold of his three days' grave, so deep the darkness, that there was no heat on earth to warm Lazarus, nor a splendor that could brighten the darkness of his eyes. That is what came to the mind of those who spoke to Lazarus, and with a sigh they left him.

And when the scarlet, flattened globe would lower, Lazarus would set out for the desert and walk straight toward the sun, as if striving to reach it. He always walked straight toward the sun, and those who tried to follow him and to spy upon what he was doing at night in the desert, retained in their memory the black silhouette of a tall stout man against the red background of an enormous flattened disk. Night pursued them with her horrors, and so they did not learn of Lazarus' doings in the desert, but the vision of the black on red was forever branded on their brains. Just as a beast with a splinter in its eye furiously rubs its muzzle with its paws, so they too foolishly rubbed their eyes, but what Lazarus had given was indelible, and Death alone could efface it.

But there were people who lived far away, who never saw Lazarus and knew of him only by report. With daring curiosity, which is stronger than fear and feeds upon it, with hidden mockery, they would come to Lazarus who was sitting in the sun and enter into conversation with him. By this time Lazarus' appearance had changed for the better and was not so terrible. The first minute they snapped their fingers and thought how stupid the inhabitants of the holy city were; but when the short talk was over and they started homeward, their looks were such that the inhabitants of the holy city recognized them at once and said: "Look, there is one more fool on whom Lazarus has set his eye"; and they shook their heads regretfully, and lifted up their arms.

There came brave, intrepid warriors, with tinkling weapons; happy youths came with laughter and song; busy tradesmen, jingling their money, ran in for a moment, and haughty priests leaned their crosiers against Lazarus' door. And they were all strangely changed as they came away.

The same terrible shadow swooped down upon their souls and gave a new appearance to the old familiar world.

Those who still had the desire to speak expressed their feelings thus:

“All things tangible and visible grew hollow, light and transparent, similar to lightsome shadows in the darkness of night;

“For that great darkness, which holds the whole cosmos, was dispersed neither by the sun nor by the moon and the stars, but like an immense black shroud enveloped the earth and like a mother embraced it;

“It penetrated all the bodies, iron and stone, and the particles of the bodies, having lost their ties, grew lonely; and it penetrated into the depth of the particles, and the particles of particles became lonely;

“For that great void, which encircles the cosmos, was not filled by things visible, neither by the sun, nor by the moon and the stars, but reigned unrestrained, penetrating everywhere, severing body from body, particle from particle;

“In the void, hollow trees spread hollow roots threatening a fantastic fall; temples, palaces, and houses loomed up and they were hollow; and in the void men moved about restlessly, but they were light and hollow like shadows;

“For time was no more, and the beginnings of all things foresaw their end: the building was still being built, and builders were still hammering away, and its ruins were already seen and the void in its place; the man was still being born, but already funeral candles were burning at his head, and now they were extinguished, and there was the void in place of the man and of the funeral candles;

“And wrapped by void and darkness the man in despair trembled in the face of the horror of the infinite.”

Thus spake the men who had still a desire to speak. But,

surely, much more could those have told who wished not to speak, and died in silence.

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At that time there lived in Rome a renowned sculptor. In clay, marble and bronze he wrought bodies of gods and men, and such was their beauty that people called them immortal. But he himself was discontented and asserted that there was something even more beautiful, that he could not embody either in marble or in bronze. "I have not yet gathered the glimmers of the moon, nor have I my fill of sunshine," he was wont to say, "and there is no soul in my marble, no life in my beautiful bronze." And when on moonlit nights he slowly walked along the road, crossing the black shadows of cypresses, his white tunic glittering in the moonshine, those who met him would laugh in a friendly way and say:

"Are you going to gather moonshine, Aurelius? Why then did you not fetch baskets?"

And he would answer, laughing and pointing to his eyes:

"Here are the baskets wherein I gather the sheen of the moon and the glimmer of the sun."

And so it was: the moon glimmered in his eyes and the sun sparkled therein. But he could not translate them into marble, and therein lay the serene tragedy of his life.

He was descended from an ancient patrician race, had a good wife and children, and suffered from no want.

When the obscure rumor about Lazarus reached him, he consulted his wife and friends and undertook the far journey to Judea to see him who had miraculously risen from the dead. He was somewhat weary in those days and he hoped that the road would sharpen his blunted senses. What was said of Lazarus did not frighten him: he had pondered much over Death, did not like it, but he disliked also those who confused it with life. "In this life are life and beauty,"

thought he; "beyond is Death, the unsolved enigma; there is no better thing for a man to do than to delight in life and in the beauty of all things living." He had even a vainglorious desire to convince Lazarus of the truth of his own view and restore his soul to life, as his body had been restored. This seemed so much easier because the rumors, shy and strange, did not render the whole truth about Lazarus and but vaguely warned against something frightful.

Lazarus had just risen from the stone in order to follow the sun which was setting in the desert, when a rich Roman, attended by an armed slave, approached him and addressed him in a sonorous voice: "Lazarus!"

And Lazarus beheld a man, with a superb face lit with glory, and arrayed in fine clothes, and precious stones sparkling in the sun. The red light lent to the Roman's face and head the appearance of gleaming bronze: that also Lazarus noticed. He resumed obediently his place and lowered his weary eyes.

"Yes, you are ugly, my poor Lazarus," quietly said the Roman, playing with his golden chain; "you are even horrible, my poor friend; and Death was not lazy that day when you fell so heedlessly into his hands. But you are stout, and, as the great Cæsar used to say, fat people are not ill-tempered; to tell the truth, I don't understand why men fear you. Permit me to spend the night in your house; the hour is late, and I have no shelter."

Never had anyone asked Lazarus' hospitality.

"I have no bed," said he.

"I am somewhat of a soldier and I can sleep sitting," the Roman answered. "We shall build a fire."

"I have no fire."

"Then we shall have our talk in the darkness, like two friends. I think you will find a bottle of wine."

“I have no wine.”

The Roman laughed.

“Now I see why you are so somber and dislike your second life. No wine! Why, then we shall do without it: there are words that make the head go round better than the Falernian.”

By a sign he dismissed the slave, and they remained alone. And again the sculptor started speaking, but it was as if, together with the setting sun, life had left his words; and they grew pale and hollow, as if they staggered on unsteady feet, as if they slipped and fell down, drunk with the heavy lees of weariness and despair. And black chasms grew up between the words, like far-off hints of the great void and the great darkness.

“Now I am your guest, and you will not be unkind to me, Lazarus!” said he. “Hospitality is the duty even of those who for three days were dead. Three days, I was told, you rested in the grave. There it must be cold . . . and thence comes your ill habit of going without fire and wine. As to me, I like fire; it grows dark here so rapidly. . . . The lines of your eyebrows and forehead are quite, quite interesting: they are like ruins of strange palaces, buried in ashes after an earthquake. But why do you wear such ugly and queer garments? I have seen bridegrooms in your country, and they wear such clothes—are they not funny?—and terrible? . . . But are you a bridegroom?”

The sun had already disappeared, a monstrous black shadow came running from the east—it was as if gigantic bare feet began rumbling on the sand—and the wind sent a cold wave along the backbone.

“In the darkness you seem still larger, Lazarus, as if you have grown stouter in these moments. Do you feed on darkness, Lazarus? I would fain have a little fire—at least

a little fire, a little fire. I feel somewhat chilly; your nights are so barbarously cold. Were it not so dark, I should say that you were looking at me, Lazarus. Yes, it seems to me you are looking. . . . Why, you are looking at me, I feel it—but, there, you are smiling.”

Night came, and filled the air with heavy blackness.

“How well it will be, when the sun will rise to-morrow anew. . . . I am a great sculptor, you know; that is what my friends call me. I create. Yes, that is the word . . . but I need daylight. I give life to the cold marble, I melt sonorous bronze in fire, in bright hot fire. . . . Why did you touch me with your hand?”

“Come,” said Lazarus. “You are my guest.”

They went to the house. And a long night enveloped the earth.

The slave, seeing that his master did not come, went to seek him, when the sun was already high in the sky. And he beheld his master side by side with Lazarus: in profound silence they were sitting right under the dazzling and scorching rays of the sun and looking upward. The slave began to weep and cried out: “My master, what has befallen you, master?”

The very same day the sculptor left for Rome. On the way Aurelius was pensive and taciturn, staring attentively at everything—the men, the ship, the sea, as if trying to retain something. On the high sea a storm burst upon them, and all through it Aurelius stayed on the deck and eagerly scanned the seas looming near and sinking with a dull boom.

At home his friends were frightened at the change which had taken place in Aurelius, but he calmed them, saying meaningly: “I have found it.”

And without changing the dusty clothes he wore on his journey, he fell to work, and the marble obediently re-

sounded under his sonorous hammer. Long and eagerly he worked, admitting no one, until one morning he announced that the work was ready and ordered his friends to be summoned, severe critics and connoisseurs of art. And to meet them he put on bright and gorgeous garments, that glittered with yellow gold, and scarlet byssus.

"Here is my work," said he thoughtfully.

His friends glanced, and a shadow of profound sorrow covered their faces. It was something monstrous, deprived of all the lines and shapes familiar to the eye, but not without a hint at some new, strange image.

On a thin, crooked twig, or rather on an ugly likeness of a twig, rested askew a blind, ugly, shapeless, outspread mass of something utterly and inconceivably distorted, a mad heap of wild and bizarre fragments, all feebly and vainly striving to part from one another. And, as if by chance, beneath one of the wildly-rent salients a butterfly was chiseled with divine skill, all airy loveliness, delicacy and beauty, with transparent wings which seemed to tremble with an impotent desire to take flight.

"Wherefore this wonderful butterfly; Aurelius?" said somebody falteringly.

"I know not," was the sculptor's answer.

But it was necessary to tell the truth, and one of his friends who loved him best said firmly: "This is ugly, my poor friend. It must be destroyed. Give me the hammer."

And with two strokes he broke the monstrosity into pieces, leaving only the infinitely delicate butterfly untouched.

From that time on Aurelius created nothing. With profound indifference he looked at marble and bronze and on his former divine works, where everlasting beauty rested. With the purpose of arousing his former fervent passion for

work and awakening his deadened soul, his friends took him to see other artists' beautiful works, but he remained indifferent as before, and the smile did not warm up his tightened lips. And only after listening to lengthy talks about beauty, he would retort wearily and indolently: "But all this is a lie."

By day, when the sun was shining, he went into his magnificent, skillfully built garden, and having found a place without shadow, he exposed his bare head to the glare and heat. Red and white butterflies fluttered around; from the crooked lips of a drunken satyr water streamed down with a splash into a marble cistern; but he sat motionless and silent, like a pallid reflection of him who, in the far-off distance, at the very gates of the stony desert, sat under the fiery sun.

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And now it came to pass that the great, deified Augustus himself summoned Lazarus. The imperial messengers dressed him gorgeously, in solemn nuptial clothes, as if Time had legalized them, and he was to remain until his very death the bridegroom of an unknown bride. It was as if an old, rotting coffin had been gilded and furnished with new, gay tassels. And men, all in trim and bright attire, rode after him, as if in bridal procession indeed, and those foremost trumpeted loudly, bidding people to clear the way for the emperor's messengers. But Lazarus' way was deserted: his native land cursed the hateful name of him who had miraculously risen from the dead, and people scattered at the very news of his appalling approach. The solitary voice of the brass trumpets sounded in the motionless air, and the wilderness alone responded with its languid echo.

Then Lazarus went by sea. And his was the most magnificently arrayed and the most mournful ship that ever mirrored itself in the azure waves of the Mediterranean Sea.

Many were the travelers aboard, but like a tomb was the ship, all silence and stillness, and the despairing water sobbed at the steep, proudly curved prow. All alone sat Lazarus, exposing his head to the blaze of the sun, silently listening to the murmur and splash of the wavelets, and afar seamen and messengers were sitting, a vague group of weary shadows. Had the thunder burst and the wind attacked the red sails, the ship would probably have perished, for none of those aboard had either the will or the strength to struggle for life. With a supreme effort some mariners would reach the board and eagerly scan the blue, transparent deep, hoping to see a naiad's pink shoulder flash in the hollow of an azure wave, or a drunken gay centaur dash along and in frenzy splash the wave with his hoof. But the sea was like a wilderness, and the deep was dumb and deserted.

With utter indifference Lazarus set his feet on the street of the eternal city, as if all her wealth, all the magnificence of her palaces built by giants, all the resplendence, beauty, and music of her refined life were but the echo of the wind in the wilderness, the reflection of the desert quicksand. Chariots were dashing, and along the streets were moving crowds of strong, fair, proud builders of the eternal city and haughty participants in her life; a song sounded; fountains and women laughed a pearly laughter; drunken philosophers harangued, and the sober listened to them with a smile; hoofs struck the stone pavements. And surrounded by cheerful noise, a stout, heavy man was moving, a cold spot of silence and despair, and on his way he sowed disgust, anger, and vague, gnawing weariness. Who dares to be sad in Rome? the citizens wondered indignantly, and frowned. In two days the entire city already knew all about him who had miraculously risen from the dead, and shunned him shyly.

But some daring people there were, who wanted to test their strength, and Lazarus obeyed their imprudent summons. Kept busy by state affairs, the emperor constantly delayed the reception, and seven days did he who had risen from the dead go about visiting others.

And Lazarus came to a cheerful Epicurean, and the host met him with laughter: "Drink, Lazarus, drink!" he shouted. "Would not Augustus laugh to see you drunk?"

And half-naked drunken women laughed, and rose petals fell on Lazarus' blue hands. But then the Epicurean looked into Lazarus' eyes, and his gayety ended forever. Drunkard remained he for the rest of his life; never did he drink, yet forever was he drunk. But instead of the gay revelry which wine brings with it, frightful dreams began to haunt him, the sole food of his stricken spirit. Day and night he lived in the poisonous vapors of his nightmares, and Death itself was not more frightful than its raving, monstrous fore-runners.

And Lazarus came to a youth and his beloved, who loved each other and were most beautiful in their passion. Proudly and strongly embracing his love, the youth said with serene regret: "Look at us, Lazarus, and share our joy. Is there anything stronger than love?"

And Lazarus looked. And for the rest of their life they kept on loving each other, but their passion grew gloomy and joyless, like those funereal cypresses whose roots feed on the decay of the graves and whose black summits in a still evening hour seek in vain to reach the sky. Thrown by the unknown forces of life into each other's embraces, they mingled tears with kisses, voluptuous pleasures with pain, and they felt themselves doubly slaves, obedient slaves to life, and patient servants of the silent Nothingness. Ever

united, ever severed, they blazed like sparks and like sparks lost themselves in the boundless Dark.

And Lazarus came to a haughty sage, and the sage said to him: "I know all the horrors you can reveal to me. Is there anything you can frighten me with?"

But before long the sage felt that the knowledge of horror was far from being the horror itself, and that the vision of Death was not Death. And he felt that wisdom and folly are equal before the face of Infinity, for Infinity knows them not. And it vanished, the dividing-line between knowledge and ignorance, truth and falsehood, top and bottom, and the shapeless thought hung suspended in the void. Then the sage clutched his gray head and cried out frantically: "I cannot think! I cannot think!"

Thus under the indifferent glance of him, who miraculously had risen from the dead, perished everything that asserts life, its significance and joys. And it was suggested that it was dangerous to let him see the emperor, that it was better to kill him and, having buried him secretly, to tell the emperor that he had disappeared no one knew whither. Already swords were being whetted and youths devoted to the public welfare prepared for the murder, when Augustus ordered Lazarus to be brought before him next morning, thus destroying the cruel plans.

If there was no way of getting rid of Lazarus, at least it was possible to soften the terrible impression his face produced. With this in view, skillful painters, barbers and artists were summoned, and all night long they were busy over Lazarus' head. They cropped his beard, curled it, and gave it a tidy, agreeable appearance. By means of paints they concealed the corpselike blueness of his hands and face. Repulsive were the wrinkles of suffering that furrowed his old face, and they were puttied, painted, and smoothed;

then, over the smooth background, wrinkles of good-tempered laughter and pleasant, carefree mirth were skillfully painted with fine brushes.

Lazarus submitted indifferently to everything that was done to him. Soon he was turned into a becomingly stout, venerable old man, apparently a kind grandfather of numerous offspring. It seemed that a smile, with which only a while ago he might have been spinning funny yarns, was still lingering on his lips, and that in the corner of his eye serene tenderness was hiding, the companion of old age. But people did not dare change his nuptial garments, and they could not change his eyes, two dark and frightful glasses through which the unknowable Yonder looked at men.

Lazarus was not moved by the magnificence of the imperial palace. It was as if he saw no difference between the crumbling house, closely pressed by the desert, and the stone palace, solid and fair, and indifferently he passed into it. The hard marble of the floors under his feet grew similar to the quicksand of the desert, and the multitude of richly dressed and haughty men became like void air under his glance. No one looked into his face as Lazarus passed by, fearing to fall under the appalling influence of his eyes; but when the sound of his heavy footsteps had sufficiently died down the courtiers raised their heads and with fearful curiosity examined the figure of a stout, tall, slightly bent old man, who was slowly penetrating into the very heart of the imperial palace. Were Death itself passing, it would be faced with no greater fear: for until then the dead alone knew Death, and those alive know Life only—and there was no bridge between them. But this extraordinary man, although alive, knew Death, and enigmatical, appalling was

his cursed knowledge. "Woe!" people thought; "he will take the life of our great, deified Augustus"; and then sent curses after Lazarus, who meanwhile kept on advancing into the interior of the palace.

Already did the emperor know who Lazarus was, and prepared to meet him. But the monarch was a brave man, and felt his own tremendous, unconquerable power, and in his fatal duel with him who had miraculously risen from the dead he wanted not to invoke human help. And so he met Lazarus face to face.

"Lift not your eyes upon me, Lazarus," he ordered. "I heard your face is like that of Medusa and turns into stone whomsoever you look at. Now, I wish to see you and talk with you, before I turn into stone," he added in a tone of kingly jesting, not devoid of fear.

Coming close to him, he carefully examined Lazarus' face and his strange festal garments. And although he had a keen eye, he was deceived by his appearance.

"So. You do not appear terrible, my venerable old man. But the worse for us, if horror assumes such a respectable and pleasant air. Now let us have a talk."

Augustus sat, and questioning Lazarus with his eye as much as with words, started the conversation: "Why did you not greet me as you entered?"

Lazarus answered indifferently: "I knew not it was necessary."

"Are you a Christian?"

"No."

Augustus approvingly shook his head

"That is good. I do not like Christians. They shake the tree of life before it is covered with fruit, and disperse its odorous bloom to the winds. But who are you?"

With a visible effort Lazarus answered: "I was dead."

“I had heard that. But who are you now?”

Lazarus was silent, but at last repeated in a tone of weary apathy: “I was dead.”

“Listen to me, stranger,” said the emperor, distinctly and severely giving utterance to the thought that had come to him at the beginning, “my realm is the realm of Life, my people are of the living, not of the dead. You are here one too many. I know not who you are and what you saw there; but, if you lie, I hate your lies, and if you tell the truth, I hate your truth. In my bosom I feel the throb of life; I feel strength in my arm, and my proud thoughts, like eagles, pierce the space. And yonder in the shelter of my rule, under the protection of laws created by me, people live and toil and rejoice. Do you hear the battle-cry, the challenge men throw into the face of the future?”

Augustus, as if in prayer, stretched forth his arms and exclaimed solemnly: “Be blessed, O great and divine Life!”

Lazarus was silent, and with growing sternness the emperor went on: “You are not wanted here, miserable remnant. Snatched from under Death’s teeth, you inspire weariness and disgust with life; like a caterpillar in the fields, you gloat on the rich ear of joy and belch out the drivel of despair and sorrow. Your truth is like a rusty sword in the hands of a nightly murderer, and as a murderer you shall be executed. But before that, let me look into your eyes. Perchance only cowards are afraid of them, but in the brave they awake the thirst for strife and victory; then you shall be rewarded, not executed. . . . Now, look at me, Lazarus.”

At first it appeared to the deified Augustus that a friend was looking at him, so soft, so tenderly fascinating was Lazarus’ glance. It promised not horror, but sweet rest, and the Infinite seemed to him a tender mistress, a compassionate sister, a mother. But stronger and stronger grew its em-

braces, and already the mouth, greedy of hissing kisses, interfered with the monarch's breathing, and already to the surface of the soft tissues of the body came the iron of the bones and tightened its merciless circle, and unknown fangs, blunt and cold, touched his heart and sank into it with slow indolence.

"It pains," said the defied Augustus, growing pale. "But look at me, Lazarus, look."

It was as if some heavy gates, ever closed, were slowly moving apart, and through the growing interstice the appalling horror of the Infinite poured slowly and steadily. Like two shadows entered the shoreless void and the unfathomable darkness; they extinguished the sun, ravished the earth from under the feet, and the roof from over the head. No more did the frozen heart ache.

"Look, look, Lazarus," ordered Augustus, tottering.

Time stood still, and the beginning of each thing grew frightfully near to its end. Augustus' throne, just erected, crumbled down, and the void was already in the place of the throne and of Augustus. Noiselessly did Rome crumble down, and a new city stood on its site and it too was swallowed by the void. Like fantastic giants, cities, states and countries fell down and vanished in the darkness, and with uttermost indifference did the insatiable black womb of the Infinite swallow them.

"Halt!" ordered the emperor.

In his voice sounded already a note of indifference, his hands dropped in languor, and in the vain struggle with the onrushing darkness his fiery eyes now blazed up, and then went out.

"My life you have taken from me, Lazarus," said he in a spiritless, feeble voice.

And these words of hopelessness saved him. He remem-

bered his people, whose shield he was destined to be, and keen salutary pain pierced his deadened heart. "They are doomed to death," he thought wearily. "Serene shadows in the darkness of the Infinite," thought he, and horror grew upon him. "Frail vessels with living, seething blood, with a heart that knows sorrow and also great joy," said he in his heart, and tenderness pervaded it.

Thus pondering and oscillating between the poles of Life and Death, he slowly came back to life, to find in its suffering and in its joys a shield against the darkness of the void and the horror of the Infinite.

"No, you have not murdered me, Lazarus," said he firmly, "but I will take your life. Begone."

That evening the deified Augustus partook of his meats and drinks with particular joy. Now and then his lifted hand remained suspended in the air, and a dull glimmer replaced the bright sheen of his fiery eye. It was the cold wave of Horror that surged at his feet. Defeated but not undone, ever awaiting its hour, that Horror stood at the emperor's bedside like a black shadow all through his life; it swayed his nights, but yielded the days to the sorrows and joys of life.

The following day, the hangman with a hot iron burned out Lazarus' eyes. Then he was sent home. The deified Augustus dared not kill him.

Lazarus returned to the desert, and the wilderness met him with hissing gusts of wind and the heat of the blazing sun. Again he was sitting on a stone, his rough, bushy beard lifted up; and the two black holes in place of his eyes looked at the sky with an expression of dull terror. Afar off the holy city stirred noisily and restlessly, but around him everything was deserted and dumb. No one approached the place where lived he who had miraculously risen from the

dead, and long since his neighbors had forsaken their houses. Driven by the hot iron into the depth of his skull, his cursed knowledge hid there in an ambush. As if leaping out from an ambush it plunged its thousand invisible eyes into the man, and no one dared look at Lazarus.

And in the evening, when the sun, reddening and growing wider, would come nearer and nearer the western horizon, the blind Lazarus would slowly follow it. He would stumble against stones and fall, stout and weak as he was; would rise heavily to his feet and walk on again; and on the red screen of the sunset his black body and outspread hands would form a monstrous likeness of a cross.

And it came to pass that once he went out and did not come back. Thus seemingly ended the second life of him who for three days had been under the enigmatical sway of death, and rose miraculously from the dead.

THE LAME PRIEST

BY S. CARLETON

IF the air had not been December's, I should have said there was balm in it. Balm there was, to me, in the sight of the road before me. The first snow of winter had been falling for an hour or more; the barren hill was white with it. What wind there was was behind me, and I stopped to look my fill.

The long slope stretched up till it met the sky, the softly rounded white of it melting into the gray clouds—the dove-brown clouds—that touched the summit, brooding, infinitely gentle. From my feet led the track, sheer white, where old infrequent wheels had marked two channels for the snow to lie; in the middle a clear filmy brown,—not the shadow of a color, but the light of one; and the gray and white and brown of it all was veiled and strange with the blue-gray mist of falling snow. So quiet, so kind, it fell, I could not move for looking at it, though I was not halfway home.

My eyes are not very good. I could not tell what made that brown light in the middle of the track till I was on it, and saw it was only grass standing above the snow; tall, thin, feathery autumn grass, dry and withered. It was so beautiful I was sorry to walk on it.

I stood looking down at it, and then, because I had to get on, lifted my eyes to the skyline. There was something black there, very big against the low sky; very swift, too, on its feet, for I had scarcely wondered what it was before it had

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come so close that I saw it was a man, a priest in his black soutane. I never saw any man who moved so fast without running. He was close to me, at my side, passing me even as I thought it.

"You are hurried, father," said I, meaning to be civil. I see few persons in my house, twelve miles from the settlement, and I had my curiosity to know where this strange priest was going. For he was a stranger.

"To the churchyard, my brother,—to the churchyard," he answered, in a chanting voice, yet not the chanting you hear in the churches. He was past me as he spoke,—five yards past me down the hill.

The churchyard! Yes, there was a burying. Young John Noel was dead these three days. I had heard that in the village.

"This priest will be late," I thought, wondering why young John must have two priests to bury him. Father Moore was enough for everyone else. And then I wondered why he had called me "brother."

I turned to watch him down the hill and saw what I had not seen before. The man was lame. His left foot hirpled, either in trick or infirmity. In the shallow snow his track lay black and uneven where the sound foot had taken the weight. I do not know why, but that black track had a desolate look on the white ground, and the black priest hurrying down the hill looked desolate, too. There was something infinitely lonely, infinitely pathetic, in that scurrying figure, indistinct through the falling snow.

I had grown chilled standing, and it made me shiver; or else it was the memory of the gaunt face, the eyes that did not look at me, the incredible, swift lameness of the strange priest. However it was, virtue had gone from me. I went on to the top of the hill without much spirit, and into the woods.

And in the woods the kindness had gone from the snow-fall. The familiar rocks and stumps were unfamiliar, threatening. Half a dozen times I wondered what a certain thing could be that crouched before me in the dusk, only to find it a rotten log, a boulder in the bare bushes. Whether I hurried faster than I knew, for that unfriendliness around me, I did not trouble to think, but I was in a wringing sweat when I came out at my own clearing. As I crossed it to my door something startled me; what, I do not know. It was only a faint sound, far off, unknown, unrecognizable, but unpleasing. I forgot the door was latched (I leave my house by the window when I go out for the day), and pushed it sharply. It gave to my hand. There was no stranger inside, at least. An old Indian sat by the smoldering fire, with my dog at his feet.

“Andrew!” said I. “Is anything wrong?” I had it always in my mind, when he came unexpectedly, that his wife might be dead. She had been smoking her pipe and dying these ten years back.

“I don’t know.” The old man smiled as he carefully shut and barred the door I had left ajar. “He want tobacco, so I come. You good man to me. You not home; I wait and make supper; my meat.” He nodded proudly at the dull embers, and I saw he had an open pot on them, with a hacked-off joint of moose-meat. “I make him stew.”

He had done the same thing before, a sort of tacit payment for the tobacco he wanted. I was glad to see him, for I was so hot and tired from my walk home that I knew I must be getting old very fast. It is not good to sit alone in a shack of a winter’s night and know you are getting old very fast.

When there was no more moose-meat we drew to the fire. Outside the wind had risen, full of a queer wailing that

sounded something like the cry of a loon. I saw Andrew was not ready to start for home though he had his hat on his head, and I realized I had not got out the tobacco. But when I put it on the table he let it lie.

"You keep me here to-night?" he asked, without a smile, almost anxiously. "Bad night, to-night. Too long way home."

I was pleased enough, but I asked if the old woman would be lonely.

"He get tobacco to-morrow." (Andrew had but the masculine third person singular; and why have more, when that serves?) "Girl with him when I come. To-morrow——" He listened for an instant to the wind, stared into the fire, and threw so mighty a bark-covered log on it that the flames flew up the chimney.

"Red deer come back to this country!" exclaimed he irrelevantly. "Come down from Maine. Wolves come back, too, over the north ice. I s'pose smell 'em? I don't know."

I nodded. I knew both things, having nothing but such things to know in the corner of God's world I call my own.

Andrew filled his pipe. If I had not been used to him, I could never have seen his eyes were not on it, but on me.

"To-morrow," he harked back abruptly, "we go 'way. Break up here; go down Lake Mooin."

"Why?" I was astounded. He had not shifted camp for years.

"I say red deer back. Not good here any more."

"But——" I wondered for half a minute if he could be afraid of the few stray wolves which had certainly come, from Heaven knew how far, the winter before. But I knew that was nonsense. It must be something about the deer. How was I to know what his mind got out of them?

"No good," he repeated; he lifted his long brown hand solemnly; "—no good here. You come too."

I laughed. "I'm too old! Andrew, who was the strange priest I met to-day crossing the upland farm?"

"Father Moore—no? Father Underhill?"

"No. Thin, tired-looking, lame."

"Lame! Dray leg? Hurry?" I had never seen him so excited, never seen him stop in full career as now. "I don't know." It was a different man speaking. "Strange priest, not belong here. You come Lake Mooin with me."

"Tell me about the priest first," though I knew it was useless as I ordered it.

He spat into the fire. "Lame dog, lame woman, lame priest,—all no good!" said he. "What time late you sit up here?"

Not late that night, assuredly. I was more tired than I wanted to own. But long after I had gone to my bunk in the corner I saw Andrew's wrinkled face alert and listening in the firelight. He played with something in his hand, and I knew there was that in his mind which he would not say. The wind had died away; there was no more loon-calling, or whatever it was. I fell to sleep to the sound of the fire, the soft pat of snow against the window. But the straight old figure in my chair sat rigid, rigid.

I opened my eyes to broad, dull daylight. Andrew and the tobacco were gone. But on the table was something I did not see till I was setting my breakfast there: three bits of twig, two uprights and a crosspiece; a lake-shore pebble; a bit of charred wood. I supposed it was something about coming back from Lake Mooin to sit by my fire again, and I swept the picture-writing away as I put down my teapot. Afterwards I was glad.

I began to wonder if it would ever stop snowing. Andrew's

track from my door was filled up already. I sat down to my fly-tying and my books, with a pipe in my mouth and an old tune at my heart, when I heard a hare shriek out. I will have no traps on my grant,—a beggarly hundred acres, not cleared, and never will be; I have no farmer blood,—and for a moment I distrusted Andrew. I put on my boots and went out.

The dog plumped into the woods ahead of me, and came back. The hare shrieked again, and was cut off in midcry.

“Indian is Indian!” said I savagely. “Andrew!” But no one answered.

The dog fell behind me, treading in my steps.

In the thick spruces there was nothing; nothing in the opener hardwood, till I came out on a clear place under a big tree, with the snow falling over into my boot legs. There, stooping in the snow, with his back to me, was a man,—the priest of yesterday. Priest or no priest, I would not have it; and I said so.

He smiled lightly, his soutane gathered up around him.

“I do not snare. Look!” He moved aside, and I saw the bloody snow, the dead hare. “Something must have killed it and been frightened away. It is very odd.” He looked round him, as I did, for the fox or wildcat tracks that were not there. Except for my bootprints from my side, and his uneven track from his, there was not a mark on the snow. It might have been a wildcat who jumped to some tree, but even so it was queer.

“Very odd,” he said again. “Will you have the hare?”

I shook my head. I had no fancy for it.

“It is good meat.”

I had turned to see where my dog had gone, but I looked back at the sound of his voice, and was ashamed. Pinched,

tired, bedraggled, he held up the hare; and his eyes were sharp with hunger.

I looked for no more phantom tracks; I forgot he had sinned about the hare. I was ashamed that I, well fed, had shamed him, empty, by wondering foolishly about wildcats. Yet even so I had less fancy for that hare than ever.

"Let it lie," said I. "I have better meat, and I suppose the beasts are hungry as well as we. If you are not hurried, come in and have a bite with me. I see few strangers out here. You would do me a kindness."

A very strange look came on his face. "A kindness!" he exclaimed. "I—do a kindness!"

He seemed so taken aback that I wondered if he were not a little mad. I do not like madmen, but I could not turn round on him.

"You are off the track to anywhere," I explained. "There are no settlements for a hundred miles back of me. If you come in, I will give you your bearings."

"Off the track!" he repeated, almost joyfully. "Yes, yes. But I am very strong. I suppose"—his voice dragged into a whisper—"I shall not be able to help getting back to a settlement again. But——" He looked at me for the first time, with considering eyes like a dog's, only more afraid, less gentle. "You are a good man, brother," he said. "I will come."

He cast a shuddering glance at the hare, and threw it behind him. As I turned to go he drifted lamely after me, just as a homeless dog does, half hope, half terrified suspicion. But I fancied he laid a greedy eye at the bloody hare after he had turned away from it.

Somehow, he was not a comfortable companion, and I was sorry I had no lunatic asylum. I whistled for my dog, but he had run home. He liked neither snow nor strangers. I saw

his great square head in my bed as I let the priest in, and I knew he was annoyed. Dogs are funny things.

Mad or sane, that priest ate ravenously. When he had finished his eyes were steadier, though he started frightfully when I dropped some firewood,—jerking toward the door.

“Were you in time for the funeral yesterday, father?” I asked, to put him at his ease. But at first he did not answer.

“I turned back,” he said at last, in the chanting voice of yesterday. “You live alone, brother? Alone, like me, in the wilderness?”

I said yes. I supposed he was one of the Indian priests who live alone indeed. He was no town priest, for his nails were worn to the quick.

“You should bar your door at night,” he continued slowly, as if it were a distasteful duty. “These woods are not—not as they were.”

Here was another warning, the second in twenty-four hours. I forgot about his being crazy.

“I always bar it.” I answered shortly enough. I was tired of these child’s terrors, all the more that I myself had felt evil in the familiar woods only yesterday.

“Do *more*!” cried the priest. He stood up, a taller man than I had thought him, a gaunt, hunted-looking man in his shabby black. “Do more! After nightfall keep your door shut, even to knocking; do not open it for any calling. The place is a bad place, and treachery——” He stopped, looked at the table, pointed at something. “Would you mind,” said he, “turning down that loaf? It is not—not true!”

I saw the loaf bottom up on the platter, and remembered. It is an old custom of silent warning that the stranger in the house is a traitor. But I had no one to warn. I laughed, and turned the loaf.

“Of course there is no traitor.”

If ever I saw gratitude, it was in his eyes, yet he spoke peevishly: “Not now; but there might be. And so I say to you, after nightfall do not open your door—till the Indians come back.”

Then he was an Indian priest. I wondered why Andrew had lied about him.

“What is this thing”—I was impatient—“that you and they are afraid of? Look out there,”—I opened the door (for the poor priest, to be truthful, was not savory), and pointed to the quiet clearing, the soft-falling snow, the fringe of spruces that were the vanguard of the woods,—“look there, and tell me what there is in my own woods that has not been there these twelve years past! Yet first an Indian comes with hints and warnings, and then you.”

“What warnings?” he cried. “The Indian’s, I mean! What warnings?”

“I am sure I do not know.” I was thoroughly out of temper; I was not always a quiet old man in a lonely shack. “Something about the red deer coming back and the place being bad.”

“That is nonsense about the red deer,” returned the priest, not in the least as if he meant it.

“Nonsense or not, it seems to have sent the Indians away.” I could not help sounding dry. I hate these silly mysteries.

He turned his back to me, and began to prowls about the room. I had opened my mouth to speak, when he forestalled me.

“You have been kind to an outcast priest.” He spoke plainly. “I tell you in return to go away; I tell you earnestly. Or else I ask you to promise me that for no reason will you leave your house after dark, or your door on the latch, till the Indians come ba——” He stopped in the middle of a

word, the middle of a step, his lame leg held up drolly. "What is that?"

It was more like the howl of a wild beast than a question, and I spun round pretty sharply. The man was crazier than I liked.

"That rubbish of twigs and stones? The Indian left them. They mean something about his coming back, I suppose."

I could not see what he was making such a fuss about. He stood in that silly, arrested attitude, and his lips had drawn back from his teeth in a kind of snarl. I stooped for the things, and it was exactly as if he snapped at me.

"Let them be. I—I have no fancy for them. They are a heathen charm." He backed away from them, drew close to the open door, and stood with a working face,—the saddest sight of fierce and weary ruin, of effort to speak kindly, that ever I saw.

"They're just a message," I began.

"That you do not understand." He held up his hand for silence, more priest and less madman than I had yet seen him. "I will tell you what they mean. The twigs, two uprights and a crosspiece, mean to keep your door shut; the stone is—the stone does not matter—call it a stranger; the charcoal"—for all the effort he was making his hand fell, and I thought he trembled—"the charcoal——"

I stooped mechanically to put the things as he described them, as Andrew had left them; but his cry checked me.

"Let the cruel things be! The charcoal means the unlucky, the burned-out souls whose bodies live accursed. No, I will not touch them, either. But do you lay them as you found them, night after night, at your door, and—and"—he was fairly grinding his teeth with the effort; even an outcast priest may feel shame at believing in heathenry—"and the unlucky, the unhappy, must pass by."

I do not know why such pity came on me, except that it is not right to see into the soul of any man, and I knew the priest must be banned, and thought Andrew had meant to warn me against him. I took the things, twigs, stone, and charcoal, and threw them into the fire.

“I’d sooner they came in,” I said.

But the strange priest gave me a look of terror, of agony. I thought he wrung his hands, but I could not tell. As if I had struck him he was over my threshold, and scurrying away with his swift lameness into the woods and the thin-falling snow. He went the way we had come in the morning, the way of the dead hare. I could not help wondering if he would take it with him if it were still there. I was sorry I had not asked him where he was going; sorrier I had not filled his pockets with food. I turned to put away my map of the district, and it was gone. He must have moved more silently than a wolf to have stolen it, but stolen it was. I could not grudge it, but I would rather have given it. I went to the bunk to pull out my sulky dog, and stood amazed. Those books lie which say dogs do not sweat.

“The priest certainly had a bad smell,” I exclaimed, “but nothing to cause all this fuss! Come out!”

But he only crawled abjectedly to the fire, and presently lifted his great head and howled.

“Snow or no snow, priest or no priest,” said I, “we will go out to get rid of these vapors”; for I had not felt much happier with my guest than had the dog.

When we came back we had forgotten him; or—why should I lie?—the dog had. I could not forget his lameness, his poor, fierce, hungry face. I made a prayer in my bed that night. (I know it is not a devout practice, but if the mind kneels I hold the body does not matter, and my mind has been kneeling for twenty years.)

“For all that are in agony and have none to pray for them, I beseech thee, O God!” And I meant the priest, as well as some others. But, however it was, I heard—— I mean I saw——no more of him. I had never heard of him so much as his name.

Christmas passed. In February I went down to the village, and there I heard what put the faint memory of the lame man out of my head. The wolves which had followed the red deer were killing, not deer in the woods, but children in the settlements. The village talked of packs of wolves, and Heaven knew how many children. I thought, if it came to bare truth, there might have been three children eaten, instead of the thirty rumor made them, and that for the fabled pack there probably stood two or three brutes, with a taste for human flesh, and a distaste for the hard running of pulling down a deer. And before I left the village I met a man who told the plain tale.

There had been ten children killed or carried off, but there had been no pack of wolves concerned, nor even three nor two. One lame wolf's track led from each robbed house, only to disappear on some highroad. More than that, the few wolves in the woods seemed to fear and shun the lonely murderer; were against him as much as the men who meant to hunt him down.

It was a queer story; I hardly thought it held water, though the man who told it was no romance-maker. I left him, and went home over the hard shining of the crusted snow, wondering why the good God, if He had not meant His children to kill, should have made the winter so long and hard.

Yellow shafts of low sunlight pierced the woods as I threaded them, and if they had not made it plain that there was nothing abroad I should have thought I heard something

padding in the underbrush. But I saw nothing till I came out on my own clearing; and there I jerked up with surprise.

The lame priest stood with his back to my window,—stood on a patch of tramped and bloody snow.

“Will you never learn sense?” he whined at me. “This is no winter to go out and leave your window unfastened. If I had not happened by, your dog would be dead.”

I stared at him. I always left the window ajar, for the dog to go out and in.

“I came by,” drawled the priest, as if he were passing every day, “and found your dog out here with three wolves on him. I—I beat them off.” He might speak calmly, but he wiped the sweat from his face. “I put him in by the window. He is only torn.”

“But you——” My wits came back to me. I thanked him as a man does who has only a dumb beast to cherish. “Why did you not go in, too? You must be frozen.”

He shook his head. “The dog is afraid of me; you saw that,” he answered simply. “He was better alone. Besides, I had my hands full at the time.”

“Are you hurt?” I would have felt his ragged clothes, but he flinched away from me.

“They were afraid, too!” He gave a short laugh. “And now I must go. Only be careful. For all you knew, there might have been wolves beside you as you came. And you had no gun.”

I knew now why he looked neither cold nor like a man who has been waiting. He had made the window safe for the dog inside, and run through the woods to guard me. I was full of wonder at the strangeness of him, and the absurd gratitude; I forgot—or rather, I did not speak of—the stolen map. I begged him to come in for the night. But he cut me off in the middle.

“I am going a long way. No, I will not take a gun. I have no fear.”

“These wolves are too much!” I cried angrily. “They told me in the village that a lame one had been harrying the settlements. I mean a wolf——” Not for worlds would I have said anything about lameness if I had remembered his.

“Do they say that?” he asked, his gaunt and furrowed face without expression. “Oh, you need not mind me. It is no secret that I—I too am lame. Are they sure?”

“Sure enough to mean to kill him.” Somehow, my tongue faltered over it.

“So they ought.” He spoke in his throat. “But—I doubt if they can!” He straightened himself, looked at the sun with a queer face. “I must be going. You need not thank me,—except, if there comes one at nightfall, do not, for my memory, let him in. Good-night, brother.”

And, “Good-night, brother,” said I.

He turned, and drifted lamely out of the clearing. He was out of my sight as quickly as if he had gone into the ground. It was true about the wolves; there were their three tracks, and the priest’s tracks running to the place where they had my dog down. If, remembering the hare, I had had other thoughts, I was ashamed of them. I was sorry I had not asked in the village about this strange man who beat off wolves with a stick; but I had, unfortunately, not known it in the village.

I was to know. Oh, I was to know!

It might have been a month after—anyhow, it was near sunset of a bitter day—when I saw the lame priest again.

Lame indeed. Bent double as if with agony, limping horribly, the sweat on his white face, he stumbled to my door. His hand was at his side; there was a dry blood stain round his mouth; yet even while he had to lean against the doorpost

he would not let me within arm's reach of him, but edged away.

"Come in, man." I was appalled. "Come in. You—are you hurt?" I thought I saw blood on his soutane, which was in flinders.

He shook his head. Like a man whose minutes are numbered, he looked at the sun; and, like a man whose minutes are numbered, could not hurry his speech.

"Not I," he said at last. "But there is a poor beast out there," nodding vaguely, "a—a dog, that has been wounded. I—I want some rags to tie up the wound, a blanket to put over him. I cannot leave him in his—his last hour."

"You can't go. I'll put him out of his misery: that will be better than blankets."

"It might," muttered he, "it might, if you could! But I must go."

I said I would go, too. But at that he seemed to lose all control of himself, and snarled out at me:

"Stay at home. I will not have you. Hurry. Get me the things."

His eyes—and, on my soul, I thought death was glazing them—were on the sinking sun when I came out again, and for the first time he did not edge away from me. I should have known without telling that he had been caring for some animal by the smell of his clothes.

"My brother that I have treated brotherly, as you me," he said, "whether I come back this night or not, keep your door shut. Do not come out—if *I had the strength to kneel, I would kneel to you*—for any calling. And I—I that ask you have loved you well; I have tried to serve you, except" (he had no pause, no awkwardness) "in the matter of that map; but you had burnt the heathen charm, and I had to find a way to keep far off from you. I am—I am a driven man!"

"There will be no calling." I was puzzled and despairing. "There has been none of that loon-crying, or whatever it was, since the night I first met you. If you would treat me as a brother, come back to my house and sleep. I will not hurt your wounded dog," though even then I knew it was no dog.

"I treat you as I know best," he answered passionately. "But if in the morning I do not come——" He seized the blanket, the rags; bounded from me in the last rays of sunlight, dragging his burden in the snow. As he vanished with his swift, incredible lameness, his voice came back high and shrill: "If I do not come in the morning, come out and give—give my dog burial. For the love of"—he was screaming—"for the love I bore you—Christian burial!"

If I had not stayed to shut the door, I should not have lost him. Until dark I called, I beat ever inch of cover. All the time I had a feeling that he was near and evading me, and at last I stopped looking for him. For all I knew he might have a camp somewhere; and camp or none, he had said pretty plainly he did not want me. I went home, angry and baffled.

It was a freezing night. The very moon looked fierce with cold. The shack snapped with frost as I sat down to the supper I could not eat for the thought of the poor soul outside; and as I sat I heard a sound, a soft, imploring call,—the same, only nearer and more insistent, as the cry on the wind the night after I first saw the priest. I was at the door, when something stopped me. I do not exaggerate when I say the mad priest's voice was in my ears: "If there comes one to your door after nightfall, do not let him in. Do not open for any crying. *If I had strength to kneel, I would kneel to you.*"

I do not think any pen on earth could put down the en-

treaty of that miserable voice, but even remembering it I would have disregarded it if, before I could so much as draw breath, that soft calling had not broken into a great ravening howl, bestial, full of malice. For a moment I thought the priest had come back raving mad; I thought silly thoughts of my cellar and my medicine chest; but as I turned for my knitted sash to tie him with, the horrid howl came again, and I knew it was no man, but a beast. Or I think that is a lie. I knew nothing, except that outside was something more horrible than I had ever dreamed of, and that I could not open my door.

I did go to the window; I put a light there for the priest to see, if he came; but I did no more. That very day I had said, "There will be no more calling," and here, in my sober senses, stood and sweated because my words were turned into a lie.

There seemed to be two voices, yet I knew it was but one. First would come the soft wailing, with the strange drawing in it. There was more terror for me in that than in the furious snarl to which it always changed; for while it was imploring it was all I could do not to let in the one who cried out there. Just as I could withstand no longer, the ravening malice of the second cry would stop me short. It was as if one called and one forbade me. But I knew there were no two things outside.

I may as well set down my shame and be done. I was afraid. I stood holding my frantic dog, and dared not look at the unshuttered window, black and shining like new ice in the lamplight, lest I should see I knew not what inhuman face looking at me through the frail pane. If I had had the heathen charm, I should have fallen to the cowardice of using it.

It may have been ten minutes that I stood with frozen

blood. All I am sure of is that I came to my senses with a great start, remembering the defenseless priest outside. I shut up my dog, took my gun, opened my door in a fury, and—did not shoot.

Not ten yards from me a wolf crouched in the snow, a dark and lonely thing. My gun was at my shoulder, but as he came at me the sound that broke from his throat loosened my arm. It was human. There is no other word for it. As I stood, sick and stupid, the poor brute stopped his rush with a great slither in the snow that was black with his blood in the moonlight, and ran,—ran terribly, lamely, from my sight,—but not before I had seen a wide white bandage bound round his gray-black back and breast.

“The priest’s dog!” I said. I thought a hundred things, and dared not meddle with what I did not understand.

I searched as best I might for what I knew I should not find,—searched till the dawn broke in a lurid sky; and under that crimson light I found the man I had called brother on the crimson snow. And as I hope to die in a house and in my bed, my rags I gave for the dying beast were round his breast, my blanket huddled at his hand. But his face, as I looked on him, I should not have known, for it was young. I put down my loaded gun, that I was glad was loaded still, and I carried the dead home. I saw no wounded wolf nor the trace of one, except the long track from my door to the priest’s body, and *that* was marked by neither teeth nor claws, but, under my rags, with bullets.

Well, he had his Christian burial!—though Father Moore, good, smooth man, would not hear my tale.

The dead priest had been outcast by his own will, not the Church’s; had roamed the county for a thousand miles, a thing afraid and a thing of fear. And now some one had killed him, perhaps by mistake.

“Who knows?” finished Father Moore softly. “Who knows? But I will have no hue and cry made about it. He was once, at least, a servant of God, and these,”—he glanced at the queer-looking bullets that had fallen from the dead man’s side as I made him ready for burial,—“I will encourage no senseless superstition in my people by trying to trace these. Especially——” But he did not finish.

So we dug the priest’s grave, taking turn by turn, for we are not young; and his brother in God buried him. What either of us thought about the whole matter we did not say.

But the very day after, while the frozen mound of consecrated earth was raw in the sunshine, Andrew walked in at my door.

“We come back,” he announced. “All good here now! Lame wolf dead. Shoot him after dark, silver bullet. Wēgŭ-lădīmōōch. Bochtŭsŭm.”¹

He said never a word about the new grave. And neither did I.

¹ Evil spirit, wolf. *Weguladimooch* is a word no Indian cares to say.

THE CALL OF CTHULHU

BY H. P. LOVECRAFT

I

The Horror in Clay

THE most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

Theosophists have guessed at the awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle wherein our world and human race form transient incidents. They have hinted at strange survivals in terms which would freeze the blood if not masked by a bland optimism. But it is not from them that there came the single glimpse of forbidden æons which chills me when I think of it and maddens me when I dream of it. That glimpse, like all dread glimpses of truth, flashed out from an accidental piecing together of separated things—in this case an old newspaper item and the notes of a dead profes-

(Found among the papers of the late Francis Wayland Thurston, of Boston.)

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sor. I hope that no one else will accomplish this piecing out; certainly, if I live, I shall never knowingly supply a link in so hideous a chain. I think that the professor, too, intended to keep silent regarding the part he knew, and that he would have destroyed his notes had not sudden death seized him.

My knowledge of the thing began in the winter of 1926-27 with the death of my grand-uncle, George Gammell Angell, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Professor Angell was widely known as an authority on ancient inscriptions, and had frequently been resorted to by the heads of prominent museums; so that his passing at the age of ninety-two may be recalled by many. Locally, interest was intensified by the obscurity of the cause of death. The professor had been stricken whilst returning from the Newport boat; falling suddenly, as witnesses said, after having been jostled by a nautical-looking negro who had come from one of the queer dark courts on the precipitous hillside which formed a short cut from the waterfront to the deceased's home in Williams Street. Physicians were unable to find any visible disorder, but concluded after perplexed debate that some obscure lesion of the heart, induced by the brisk ascent of so steep a hill by so elderly a man, was responsible for the end. At the time I saw no reason to dissent from this dictum, but latterly I am inclined to wonder—and more than wonder.

As my grand-uncle's heir and executor, for he died a childless widower, I was expected to go over his papers with some thoroughness; and for that purpose moved his entire set of files and boxes to my quarters in Boston. Much of the material which I correlated will be later published by the American Archæological Society, but there was one box which I found exceedingly puzzling, and which I felt much

averse from showing to other eyes. It had been locked, and I did not find the key till it occurred to me to examine the personal ring which the professor carried always in his pocket. Then, indeed, I succeeded in opening it, but when I did so seemed only to be confronted by a greater and more closely locked barrier. For what could be the meaning of the queer clay bas-relief and the disjointed jottings, ramblings, and cuttings which I found? Had my uncle, in his latter years, become credulous of the most superficial impostures? I resolved to search out the eccentric sculptor responsible for this apparent disturbance of an old man's peace of mind.

The bas-relief was a rough rectangle less than an inch thick and about five by six inches in area; obviously of modern origin. Its designs, however, were far from modern in atmosphere and suggestion; for although the vagaries of cubism and futurism are many and wild, they do not often reproduce that cryptic regularity which lurks in prehistoric writing. And writing of some kind the bulk of these designs seemed certainly to be; though my memory, despite much familiarity with the papers and collections of my uncle, failed in any way to identify this particular species, or even to hint at its remotest affiliations.

Above these apparent hieroglyphics was a figure of evidently pictorial intent, though its impressionistic execution forbade a very clear idea of its nature. It seemed to be a sort of monster, or symbol representing a monster, of a form which only a diseased fancy could conceive. If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the *general outline* of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful. Behind the

figure was a vague suggestion of a Cyclopean architectural background.

The writing accompanying this oddity was, aside from a stack of press cuttings, in Professor Angell's most recent hand; and made no pretense to literary style. What seemed to be the main document was headed "CTHULHU CULT" in characters painstakingly printed to avoid the erroneous reading of a word so unheard-of. This manuscript was divided into two sections, the first of which was headed "1925—Dream and Dream Work of H. A. Wilcox, 7 Thomas St., Providence, R. I.," and the second, "Narrative of Inspector John R. Legrasse, 121 Bienville St., New Orleans, La. at 1908 A.A.S. Mtg.—Notes on Same, & Prof. Webb's Acct." The other manuscript papers were all brief notes, some of them accounts of the queer dreams of different persons, some of them citations from theosophical books and magazines (notably W. Scott-Elliott's *Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria*), and the rest comments on long-surviving secret societies and hidden cults, with references to passages in such mythological and anthropological source-books as Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Miss Murray's *Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. The cuttings largely alluded to outré mental illnesses and outbreaks of group folly or mania in the spring of 1925.

The first half of the principal manuscript told a very peculiar tale. It appears that on March 1st, 1925, a thin dark young man of neurotic and excited aspect had called upon Professor Angell bearing the singular clay bas-relief, which was then exceedingly damp and fresh. His card bore the name of Henry Anthony Wilcox, and my uncle had recognized him as the youngest son of an excellent family slightly known to him, who had latterly been studying sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design and living alone at the Fleur-de-Lys Building near that institution. Wilcox was a

precocious youth of known genius but great eccentricity, and had from childhood excited attention through the strange stories and odd dreams he was in the habit of relating. He called himself "psychically hypersensitive," but the staid folk of the ancient commercial city dismissed him as merely "queer." Never mingling much with his kind, he had dropped gradually from social visibility, and was now known only to a small group of æsthetes from other towns. Even the Providence Art Club, anxious to preserve its conservatism, had found him quite hopeless.

On the occasion of the visit, ran the professor's manuscript, the sculptor abruptly asked for the benefit of his host's archæological knowledge in identifying the hieroglyphics on the bas-relief. He spoke in a dreamy, stilted manner which suggested pose and alienated sympathy; and my uncle showed some sharpness in replying, for the conspicuous freshness of the tablet implied kinship with anything but archæology. Young Wilcox's rejoinder, which impressed my uncle enough to make him recall and record it verbatim, was of a fantastically poetic cast which must have typified his whole conversation, and which I have since found highly characteristic of him. He said, "It is new, indeed, for I made it last night in a dream of strange cities; and dreams are older than brooding Tyre, or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon."

It was then that he began that rambling tale which suddenly played upon a sleeping memory and won the fevered interest of my uncle. There had been a slight earthquake tremor the night before, the most considerable felt in New England for some years; and Wilcox's imagination had been keenly affected. Upon retiring, he had had an unprecedented dream of great Cyclopean cities of Titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths, all dripping with green ooze and sinister

with latent horror. Hieroglyphics had covered the walls and pillars, and from some undetermined point below had come a voice that was not a voice; a chaotic sensation which only fancy could transmute into sound, but which he attempted to render by the almost unpronounceable jumble of letters, "*Cthulhu fhtagn.*"

This verbal jumble was the key to the recollection which excited and disturbed Professor Angell. He questioned the sculptor with scientific minuteness; and studied with almost frantic intensity the bas-relief on which the youth had found himself working, chilled and clad only in his nightclothes, when waking had stolen bewilderingly over him. My uncle blamed his old age, Wilcox afterward said, for his slowness in recognizing both hieroglyphics and pictorial design. Many of his questions seemed highly out-of-place to his visitor, especially those which tried to connect the latter with strange cults or societies; and Wilcox could not understand the repeated promises of silence which he was offered in exchange for an admission of membership in some widespread mystical or paganly religious body. When Professor Angell became convinced that the sculptor was indeed ignorant of any cult or system of cryptic lore, he besieged his visitor with demands for future reports of dreams. This bore regular fruit, for after the first interview the manuscript records daily calls of the young man, during which he related startling fragments of nocturnal imagery whose burden was always some terrible Cyclopean vista of dark and dripping stone, with a subterrene voice or intelligence shouting monotonously in enigmatical sense-impacts uninscribable save as gibberish. The two sounds most frequently repeated are those rendered by the letters "*Cthulhu*" and "*R'lyeh.*"

On March 23d, the manuscript continued, Wilcox failed

to appear; and inquiries at his quarters revealed that he had been stricken with an obscure sort of fever and taken to the home of his family in Waterman Street. He had cried out in the night, arousing several other artists in the building, and had manifested since then only alternations of unconsciousness and delirium. My uncle at once telephoned the family, and from that time forward kept close watch of the case; calling often at the Thayer Street office of Dr. Tobey, whom he learned to be in charge. The youth's febrile mind, apparently, was dwelling on strange things; and the doctor shuddered now and then as he spoke of them. They included not only a repetition of what he had formerly dreamed, but touched wildly on a gigantic thing "miles high" which walked or lumbered about. He at no time fully described this object, but occasional frantic words, as repeated by Dr. Tobey, convinced the professor that it must be identical with the nameless monstrosity he had sought to depict in his dream-sculpture. Reference to this object, the doctor added, was invariably a prelude to the young man's subsidence into lethargy. His temperature, oddly enough, was not greatly above normal; but the whole condition was otherwise such as to suggest true fever rather than mental disorder.

On April 2nd at about 3 p. m. every trace of Wilcox's malady suddenly ceased. He sat upright in bed, astonished to find himself at home and completely ignorant of what had happened in dream or reality since the night of March 22nd. Pronounced well by his physician, he returned to his quarters in three days; but to Professor Angell he was of no further assistance. All traces of strange dreaming had vanished with his recovery, and my uncle kept no record of his night-thoughts after a week of pointless and irrelevant accounts of thoroughly usual visions.

Here the first part of the manuscript ended, but refer-

ences to certain of the scattered notes gave me much material for thought—so much, in fact, that only the ingrained skepticism then forming my philosophy can account for my continued distrust of the artist. The notes in question were those descriptive of the dreams of various persons covering the same period as that in which young Wilcox had had his strange visitations. My uncle, it seems, had quickly instituted a prodigiously far-flung body of inquiries amongst nearly all the friends whom he could question without impertinence, asking for nightly reports of their dreams, and the dates of any notable visions for some time past. The reception of his request seems to have been varied; but he must, at the very least, have received more responses than any ordinary man could have handled without a secretary. This original correspondence was not preserved, but his notes formed a thorough and really significant digest. Average people in society and business—New England's traditional "salt of the earth"—gave an almost completely negative result, though scattered cases of uneasy but formless nocturnal impressions appear here and there, always between March 23d and April 2nd—the period of young Wilcox's delirium. Scientific men were little more affected, though four cases of vague description suggest fugitive glimpses of strange landscapes, and in one case there is mentioned a dread of something abnormal.

It was from the artists and poets that the pertinent answers came, and I know that panic would have broken loose had they been able to compare notes. As it was, lacking their original letters, I half suspected the compiler of having asked leading questions, or of having edited the correspondence in corroboration of what he had latently resolved to see. That is why I continued to feel that Wilcox, somehow cognizant of the old data which my uncle had possessed, had

been imposing on the veteran scientist. These responses from æsthetes told a disturbing tale. From February 28th to April 2nd a large proportion of them had dreamed very bizarre things, the intensity of the dreams being immeasurably the stronger during the period of the sculptor's delirium. Over a fourth of those who reported anything, reported scenes and half-sounds not unlike those which Wilcox had described; and some of the dreamers confessed acute fear of the gigantic nameless thing visible toward the last. One case, which the note describes with emphasis, was very sad. The subject, a widely known architect with leanings toward theosophy and occultism, went violently insane on the date of young Wilcox's seizure, and expired several months later after incessant screamings to be saved from some escaped denizen of hell. Had my uncle referred to these cases by name instead of merely by number, I should have attempted some corroboration and personal investigation; but as it was, I succeeded in tracing down only a few. All of these, however, bore out the notes in full. I have often wondered if all the objects of the professor's questioning felt as puzzled as did this fraction. It is well that no explanation shall ever reach them.

The press cuttings, as I have intimated, touched on cases of panic, mania, and eccentricity during the given period. Professor Angell must have employed a cutting bureau, for the number of extracts was tremendous and the sources scattered throughout the globe. Here was a nocturnal suicide in London, where a lone sleeper had leaped from a window after a shocking cry. Here likewise a rambling letter to the editor of a paper in South America, where a fanatic deduces a dire future from visions he has seen. A despatch from California describes a theosophist colony as donning white robes en masse for some "glorious fulfillment" which never arrives,

whilst items from India speak guardedly of serious native unrest toward the end of March. Voodoo orgies multiply in Hayti, and African outposts report ominous mutterings. American officers in the Philippines find certain tribes bothersome about this time, and New York policemen are mobbed by hysterical Levantines on the night of March 22-23. The west of Ireland, too, is full of wild rumor and legendry, and a fantastic painter named Ardois-Bonnot hangs a blasphemous "Dream Landscape" in the Paris spring salon of 1926. And so numerous are the recorded troubles in insane asylums, that only a miracle can have stopped the medical fraternity from noting strange parallelisms and drawing mystified conclusions. A weird bunch of cuttings, all told! and I can at this date scarcely envisage the callous rationalism with which I set them aside. But I was then convinced that young Wilcox had known of the older matters mentioned by the professor.

II

The Tale of Inspector Legrasse

The older matters which had made the sculptor's dream and bas-relief so significant to my uncle formed the subject of the second half of his long manuscript. Once before, it appears, Professor Angell had seen the hellish outlines of the nameless monstrosity, puzzled over the unknown hieroglyphics, and heard the ominous syllables which can be rendered only as "*Cthulhu*"; and all this in so stirring and horrible a connection that it is small wonder he pursued young Wilcox with queries and demands for data.

This earlier experience had come in 1908, seventeen years before, when the American Archæological Society held its annual meeting in St. Louis. Professor Angell, as befitted

one of his authority and attainments, had had a prominent part in all the deliberations; and was one of the first to be approached by the several outsiders who took advantage of the convocation to offer questions for correct answering and problems for expert solution.

The chief of these outsiders, and in a short time the focus of interest for the entire meeting, was a commonplace-looking middle-aged man who had traveled all the way from New Orleans for certain special information unobtainable from any local source. His name was John Raymond Legrasse, and he was by profession an Inspector of Police. With him he bore the subject of his visit, a grotesque, repulsive, and apparently very ancient stone statuette whose origin he was at a loss to determine. It must not be fancied that Inspector Legrasse had the least interest in archæology. On the contrary, his wish for enlightenment was prompted by purely professional considerations. The statuette, idol, fetish, or whatever it was, had been captured some months before in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting; and so singular and hideous were the rites connected with it, that the police could not but realize that they had stumbled on a dark cult totally unknown to them, and infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles. Of its origin, apart from the erratic and unbelievable tales extorted from the captured members, absolutely nothing was to be discovered; hence the anxiety of the police for any antiquarian lore which might help them to place the frightful symbol, and through it track down the cult to its fountain-head.

Inspector Legrasse was scarcely prepared for the sensation which his offering created. One sight of the thing had been enough to throw the assembled men of science into a state of tense excitement, and they lost no time in crowding

around him to gaze at the diminutive figure whose utter strangeness and air of genuinely abysmal antiquity hinted so potently at unopened and archaic vistas. No recognized school of sculpture had animated this terrible object, yet centuries and even thousands of years seemed recorded in its dim and greenish surface of unplaceable stone.

The figure, which was finally passed slowly from man to man for close and careful study, was between seven and eight inches in height, and of exquisitely artistic workmanship. It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing, which seemed instinct with a fearsome and unnatural malignancy, was of a somewhat bloated corpulence, and squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal covered with undecipherable characters. The tips of the wings touched the back edge of the block, the seat occupied the center, whilst the long, curved claws of the doubled-up, crouching hind legs gripped the front edge and extended a quarter of the way down toward the bottom of the pedestal. The cephalopod head was bent forward, so that the ends of the facial feelers brushed the backs of huge fore-paws which clasped the croucher's elevated knees. The aspect of the whole was abnormally lifelike, and the more subtly fearful because its source was so totally unknown. Its vast, awesome, and incalculable age was unmistakable; yet not one link did it show with any known type of art belonging to civilization's youth—or, indeed, to any other time. Totally separate and apart, its very material was a mystery; for the soapy, greenish-black stone with its golden or iridescent flecks and striations resembled nothing familiar to geology or mineralogy. The characters along the base were equally baffling; and no member present,

despite a representation of half the world's expert learning in this field, could form the least notion of even their remotest linguistic kinship. They, like the subject and material, belonged to something horribly remote and distinct from mankind as we know it; something frightfully suggestive of old and unhallowed cycles of life in which our world and our conceptions have no part.

And yet, as the members severally shook their heads and confessed defeat at the Inspector's problem, there was one man in that gathering who suspected a touch of bizarre familiarity in the monstrous shape and writing, and who presently told with some diffidence of the odd trifle he knew. This person was the late William Channing Webb, Professor of Anthropology in Princeton University, and an explorer of no slight note. Professor Webb had been engaged, forty-eight years before, in a tour of Greenland and Iceland in search of some Runic inscriptions which he failed to unearth; and whilst high up on the West Greenland coast had encountered a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness. It was a faith of which other Esquimaux knew little, and which they mentioned only with shudders, saying that it had come down from horribly ancient æons before ever the world was made. Besides nameless rites and human sacrifices there were certain queer hereditary rituals addressed to a supreme elder devil or *tornasuk*; and of this Professor Webb had taken a careful phonetic copy from an aged *angedkok* or wizard-priest, expressing the sounds in Roman letters as best he knew how. But just now of prime significance was the fetish which this cult had cherished, and around which they danced when the aurora leaped high over the ice cliffs. It was, the professor stated, a very crude bas-relief of stone, comprising

a hideous picture and some cryptic writing. And so far as he could tell, it was a rough parallel in all essential features of the bestial thing now lying before the meeting.

This data, received with suspense and astonishment by the assembled members, proved doubly exciting to Inspector Legrasse; and he began at once to ply his informant with questions. Having noted and copied an oral ritual among the swamp cult-worshipers his men had arrested, he besought the professor to remember as best he might the syllables taken down amongst the diabolist Esquimaux. There then followed an exhaustive comparison of details, and a moment of really awed silence when both detective and scientist agreed on the virtual identity of the phrase common to two hellish rituals so many worlds of distance apart. What, in substance, both the Esquimaux wizards and the Louisiana swamp-priests had chanted to their kindred idols was something very like this—the word-divisions being guessed at from traditional breaks in the phrase as chanted aloud:

“Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn.”

Legrasse had one point in advance of Professor Webb, for several among his mongrel prisoners had repeated to him what older celebrants had told them the words meant. This text, as given, ran something like this:

“In his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.”

And now, in response to a general and urgent demand, Inspector Legrasse related as fully as possible his experience with the swamp worshipers; telling a story to which I could see my uncle attached profound significance. It savored of the wildest dreams of myth-maker and theosophist, and disclosed an astonishing degree of cosmic imagination among such half-castes and pariahs as might be least expected to possess it.

On November 1st, 1907, there had come to the New Or-

leans police a frantic summons from the swamp and lagoon country to the south. The squatters there, mostly primitive but good-natured descendants of Lafitte's men, were in the grip of stark terror from an unknown thing which had stolen upon them in the night. It was voodoo, apparently, but voodoo of a more terrible sort than they had ever known; and some of their women and children had disappeared since the malevolent tom-tom had begun its incessant beating far within the black haunted woods where no dweller ventured. There were insane shouts and harrowing screams, soul-chilling chants and dancing devil-flames; and, the frightened messenger added, the people could stand it no more.

So a body of twenty police, filling two carriages and an automobile, had set out in the late afternoon with the shivering squatter as a guide. At the end of the passable road they alighted, and for miles splashed on in silence through the terrible cypress woods where day never came. Ugly roots and malignant hanging nooses of Spanish moss beset them, and now and then a pile of dank stones or fragment of a rotting wall intensified by its hint of morbid habitation a depression which every malformed tree and every fungous islet combined to create. At length the squatter settlement, a miserable huddle of huts, hove in sight; and hysterical dwellers ran out to cluster around the group of bobbing lanterns. The muffled beat of tom-toms was now faintly audible far, far ahead; and a curdling shriek came at infrequent intervals when the wind shifted. A reddish glare, too, seemed to filter through the pale undergrowth beyond endless avenues of forest night. Reluctant even to be left alone again, each one of the cowed squatters refused point-blank to advance another inch toward the scene of unholy worship, so Inspector Legrasse and his nineteen colleagues plunged on un-

guided into black arcades of horror that none of them had ever trod before.

The region now entered by the police was one of traditionally evil repute, substantially unknown and untraversed by white men. There were legends of a hidden lake unglimped by mortal sight, in which dwelt a huge, formless white polypous thing with luminous eyes; and squatters whispered that bat-winged devils flew up out of caverns in inner earth to worship it at midnight. They said it had been there before D'Iberville, before La Salle, before the Indians, and before even the wholesome beasts and birds of the woods. It was nightmare itself, and to see it was to die. But it made men dream, and so they knew enough to keep away. The present voodoo orgy was, indeed, on the merest fringe of this abhorred area, but that location was bad enough; hence perhaps the very place of the worship had terrified the squatters more than the shocking sounds and incidents.

Only poetry or madness could do justice to the noises heard by Legrasse's men as they plowed on through the black morass toward the red glare and the muffled tom-toms. There are vocal qualities peculiar to men, and vocal qualities peculiar to beasts; and it is terrible to hear the one when the source should yield the other. Animal fury and orgiastic license here whipped themselves to dæmoniac heights by howls and squawking ecstasies that tore and reverberated through those nighted woods like pestilential tempests from the gulfs of hell. Now and then the less organized ululation would cease, and from what seemed a well-drilled chorus of hoarse voices would rise in sing-song chant that hideous phrase or ritual:

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtagn."

Then the men, having reached a spot where the trees were thinner, came suddenly in sight of the spectacle itself. Four

of them reeled, one fainted, and two were shaken into a frantic cry which the mad cacophony of the orgy fortunately deadened. Legrasse dashed swamp water on the face of the fainting man, and all stood trembling and nearly hypnotized with horror.

In a natural glade of the swamp stood a grassy island of perhaps an acre's extent, clear of trees and tolerably dry. On this now leaped and twisted a more indescribable horde of human abnormality than any but a Sime or an Angarola could paint. Void of clothing, this hybrid spawn were braying, bellowing and writhing about a monstrous ring-shaped bonfire; in the center of which, revealed by occasional rifts in the curtain of flame, stood a great granite monolith some eight feet in height; on top of which, incongruous in its diminutiveness, rested the noxious carven statuette. From a wide circle of ten scaffolds set up at regular intervals with the flame-girt monolith as a center hung, head downward, the oddly marred bodies of the helpless squatters who had disappeared. It was inside this circle that the ring of worshipers jumped and roared, the general direction of the mass motion being from left to right in endless Bacchanale between the ring of bodies and the ring of fire.

It may have been only imagination and it may have been only echoes which induced one of the men, an excitable Spaniard, to fancy he heard antiphonal responses to the ritual from some far and unillumined spot deeper within the wood of ancient legendry and horror. This man, Joseph D. Galvez, I later met and questioned; and he proved distractingly imaginative. He, indeed, went so far as to hint of the faint beating of great wings, and of a glimpse of shining eyes and a mountainous white bulk beyond the remotest trees—but I suppose he had been hearing too much native superstition.

Actually, the horrified pause of the men was of compar-

atively brief duration. Duty came first; and although there must have been nearly a hundred mongrel celebrants in the throng, the police relied on their firearms and plunged determinedly into the nauseous rout. For five minutes the resultant din and chaos were beyond description. Wild blows were struck, shots were fired, and escapes were made; but in the end Legrasse was able to count some forty-seven sullen prisoners, whom he forced to dress in haste and fall into line between two rows of policemen. Five of the worshipers lay dead, and two severely wounded ones were carried away on improvised stretchers by their fellow-prisoners. The image on the monolith, of course, was carefully removed and carried back by Legrasse.

Examined at headquarters after a trip of intense strain and weariness, the prisoners all proved to be men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type. Most were seamen, and a sprinkling of negroes and mulattoes, largely West Indians or Brava Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands, gave a coloring of voodooism to the heterogeneous cult. But before many questions were asked, it became manifest that something far deeper and older than negro fetichism was involved. Degraded and ignorant as they were, the creatures held with surprising consistency to the central idea of their loathsome faith.

They worshiped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died. This was that cult, and the prisoners said it had always existed and always would exist, hidden in distant wastes and dark places all over the world until the time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark

house in the mighty city of R'lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring the earth again beneath his sway. Some day he would call, when the stars were ready, and the secret cult would always be waiting to liberate him.

Meanwhile no more must be told. There was a secret which even torture could not extract. Mankind was not absolutely alone among the conscious things of earth, for shapes came out of the dark to visit the faithful few. But these were not the Great Old Ones. No man had ever seen the Old Ones. The carven idol was great Cthulhu, but none might say whether or not the others were precisely like him. No one could read the old writing now, but things were told by word of mouth. The chanted ritual was not the secret—that was never spoken aloud, only whispered. The chant meant only this: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

Only two of the prisoners were found sane enough to be hanged, and the rest were committed to various institutions. All denied a part in the ritual murders, and averred that the killing had been done by Black Winged Ones which had come to them from their immemorial meeting-place in the haunted wood. But of those mysterious allies no coherent account could ever be gained. What the police did extract came mainly from an immensely aged mestizo named Castro, who claimed to have sailed to strange ports and talked with undying leaders of the cult in the mountains of China.

Old Castro remembered bits of hideous legend that paled the speculations of theosophists and made man and the world seem recent and transient, indeed. There had been æons when other Things ruled on the earth, and They had had great cities. Remains of Them, he said the deathless Chinamen had told him, were still to be found as Cyclopean stones on islands in the Pacific. They all died vast epochs of time before men came, but there were arts which could revive

Them when the stars had come round again to the right positions in the cycle of eternity. They had, indeed, come themselves from the stars, and brought Their images with Them.

These Great Old Ones, Castro continued, were not composed altogether of flesh and blood. They had shape—for did not this star-fashioned image prove it?—but that shape was not made of matter. When the stars were right, They could plunge from world to world through the sky; but when the stars were wrong, They could not live. But although They no longer lived, They would never really die. They all lay in stone houses in Their great city of R'lyeh, preserved by the spells of mighty Cthulhu for a glorious resurrection when the stars and the earth might once more be ready for Them. But at that time some force from outside must serve to liberate Their bodies. The spells that preserved Them intact likewise prevented Them from making an initial move, and They could only lie awake in the dark and think whilst uncounted millions of years rolled by. They knew all that was occurring in the universe, for Their mode of speech was transmitted thought. Even now They talked in Their tombs. When, after infinities of chaos, the first men came, the Great Old Ones spoke to the sensitive among them by molding their dreams; for only thus could Their language reach the fleshly minds of mammals.

Then, whispered Castro, those first men formed the cult around small idols which the Great Ones showed them; idols brought in dim eras from dark stars. That cult would never die till the stars came right again, and the secret priests would take great Cthulhu from His tomb to revive His subjects and resume His rule of earth. The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great

Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and reveling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom. Meanwhile the cult, by appropriate rites, must keep alive the memory of those ancient ways and shadow forth the prophecy of their return.

In the elder time chosen men had talked with the entombed Old Ones in dreams, but then something had happened. The great stone city R'lyeh, with its monoliths and sepulchers, had sunk beneath the waves; and the deep waters, full of the one primal mystery through which not even thought can pass, had cut off the spectral intercourse. But memory never died, and high priests said that the city would rise again when the stars were right. Then came out of the earth the black spirits of earth, mouldy and shadowy, and full of dim rumors picked up in caverns beneath forgotten sea-bottoms. But of them old Castro dared not speak much. He cut himself off hurriedly, and no amount of persuasion or subtlety could elicit more in this direction. The *size* of the Old Ones, too, he curiously declined to mention. Of the cult, he said that he thought the center lay amid the pathless deserts of Arabia, where Irem, the City of Pillars, dreams hidden and untouched. It was not allied to the European witch-cult, and was virtually unknown beyond its members. No book had ever really hinted of it, though the deathless Chinamen said that there were double meanings in the "Necronomicon" of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred which the initiated might read as they chose, especially the much-discussed couplet:

"That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange æons even death may die."

Legrasse, deeply impressed and not a little bewildered, had inquired in vain concerning the historic affiliations of the cult. Castro, apparently, had told the truth when he said that it was wholly secret. The authorities at Tulane University could shed no light upon either cult or image, and now the detective had come to the highest authorities in the country and met with no more than the Greenland tale of Professor Webb.

The feverish interest aroused at the meeting by Legrasse's tale, corroborated as it was by the statuette, is echoed in the subsequent correspondence of those who attended; although scant mention occurs in the formal publications of the society. Caution is the first care of those accustomed to face occasional charlatanry and imposture. Legrasse for some time lent the image to Professor Webb, but at the latter's death it was returned to him and remains in his possession, where I viewed it not long ago. It is truly a terrible thing, and unmistakably akin to the dream-sculpture of young Wilcox.

That my uncle was excited by the tale of the sculptor I did not wonder, for what thoughts must arise upon hearing, after a knowledge of what Legrasse had learned of the cult, of a sensitive young man who had *dreamed* not only the figure and exact hieroglyphics of the swamp-found image and the Greenland devil tablet, but had come *in his dreams* upon at least three of the precise words of the formula uttered alike by Esquimaux diabolists and mongrel Louisianians? Professor Angell's instant start on an investigation of the utmost thoroughness was eminently natural; though privately I suspected young Wilcox of having heard of the cult in some indirect way, and of having invented a series of dreams to heighten and continue the mystery at my uncle's expense. The dream-narratives and cuttings collected by the

professor were, of course, strong corroboration; but the rationalism of my mind and the extravagance of the whole subject led me to adopt what I thought the most sensible conclusions. So, after thoroughly studying the manuscript again and correlating the theosophical and anthropological notes with the cult narrative of Legrasse, I made a trip to Providence to see the sculptor and give him the rebuke I thought proper for so boldly imposing upon a learned and aged man.

Wilcox still lived alone in the Fleur-de-Lys Building in Thomas Street, a hideous Victorian imitation of seventeenth-century Breton architecture which flaunts its stuccoed front amidst the lovely Colonial houses on the ancient hill, and under the very shadow of the finest Georgian steeple in America. I found him at work in his rooms, and at once conceded from the specimens scattered about that his genius is, indeed, profound and authentic. He will, I believe, some time be heard from as one of the great decadents; for he has crystallized in clay and will one day mirror in marble those nightmares and phantasies which Arthur Machen evokes in prose, and Clark Ashton Smith makes visible in verse and in painting.

Dark, frail, and somewhat unkempt in aspect, he turned languidly at my knock and asked me my business without rising. When I told him who I was, he displayed some interest; for my uncle had excited his curiosity in probing his strange dreams, yet had never explained the reason for the study. I did not enlarge his knowledge in this regard, but sought with some subtlety to draw him out. In a short time I became convinced of his absolute sincerity, for he spoke of the dreams in a manner none could mistake. They and their subconscious residuum had influenced his art profoundly, and he showed me a morbid statue whose contours almost

made me shake with the potency of its black suggestion. He could not recall having seen the original of this thing except in his own dream bas-relief, but the outlines had formed themselves insensibly under his hands. It was, no doubt, the giant shape he had raved of in delirium. That he really knew nothing of the hidden cult, save from what my uncle's relentless catechism had let fall, he soon made clear; and again I strove to think of some way in which he could possibly have received the weird impressions.

He talked of his dreams in a strangely poetic fashion; making me see with terrible vividness the damp Cyclopean city of slimy green stone—whose *geometry*, he oddly said, was *all wrong*—and hear with frightened expectancy the ceaseless, half-mental calling from underground: "*Cthulhu fhtagn*," "*Cthulhu fhtagn*." These words had formed part of that dread ritual which told of dead Cthulhu's dream-vigil in his stone vault at R'lyeh, and I felt deeply moved despite my rational beliefs. Wilcox, I was sure, had heard of the cult in some casual way, and had soon forgotten it amidst the mass of his equally weird reading and imagining. Later, by virtue of its sheer impressiveness, it had found subconscious expression in dreams, in the bas-relief, and in the terrible statue I now beheld; so that his imposture upon my uncle had been a very innocent one. The youth was of a type, at once slightly affected and slightly ill-mannered, which I could never like; but I was willing enough now to admit both his genius and his honesty. I took leave of him amicably, and wish him all the success his talent promises.

The matter of the cult still remained to fascinate me, and at times I had visions of personal fame from researches into its origin and connections. I visited New Orleans, talked with Legrasse and others of that old-time raiding-party, saw the frightful image, and even questioned such of the mongrel

prisoners as still survived. Old Castro, unfortunately, had been dead for some years. What I now heard so graphically at first-hand, though it was really no more than a detailed confirmation of what my uncle had written, excited me afresh; for I felt sure that I was on the track of a very real, very secret, and very ancient religion whose discovery would make me an anthropologist of note. My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, *as I wish it still were*, and I discounted with almost inexplicable perversity the coincidence of the dream notes and odd cuttings collected by Professor Angell.

One thing I began to suspect, and which I now fear I *know*, is that my uncle's death was far from natural. He fell on a narrow hill street leading up from an ancient waterfront swarming with foreign mongrels, after a careless push from a negro sailor. I did not forget the mixed blood and marine pursuits of the cult-members in Louisiana, and would not be surprised to learn of secret methods and poison needles as ruthless and as anciently known as the cryptic rites and beliefs. Legrasse and his men, it is true, have been let alone; but in Norway a certain seaman who saw things is dead. Might not the deeper inquiries of my uncle after encountering the sculptor's data have come to sinister ears? I think Professor Angell died because he knew too much, or because he was likely to learn too much. Whether I shall go as he did remains to be seen, for I have learned much now.

III

The Madness from the Sea

If Heaven ever wishes to grant me a boon, it will be a total effacing of the results of a mere chance which fixed my

eye on a certain stray piece of shelf-paper. It was nothing on which I would naturally have stumbled in the course of my daily round, for it was an old number of an Australian journal, the *Sydney Bulletin* for April 18, 1925. It had escaped even the cutting bureau which had at the time of its issuance been avidly collecting material for my uncle's research.

I had largely given over my inquiries into what Professor Angell called the "Cthulhu Cult," and was visiting a learned friend in Paterson, New Jersey, the curator of a local museum and a mineralogist of note. Examining one day the reserve specimens roughly set on the storage shelves in a rear room of the museum, my eye was caught by an odd picture in one of the old papers spread beneath the stones. It was the *Sydney Bulletin* I have mentioned, for my friend has wide affiliations in all conceivable foreign parts; and the picture was a half-tone cut of a hideous stone image almost identical with that which Legrasse had found in the swamp.

Eagerly clearing the sheet of its precious contents, I scanned the item in detail; and was disappointed to find it of only moderate length. What it suggested, however, was of portentous significance to my flagging quest; and I carefully tore it out for immediate action. It read as follows:

MYSTERY DERELICT FOUND AT SEA

Vigilant Arrives With Helpless Armed New Zealand Yacht in Tow. One Survivor and Dead Man Found Aboard. Tale of Desperate Battle and Deaths at Sea. Rescued Seaman Refuses Particulars of Strange Experience. Odd Idol Found in His Possession. Inquiry To Follow.

The Morrison Co.'s freighter *Vigilant*, bound from Valparaiso, arrived this morning at its wharf in Darling Harbour, having in tow the battled and disabled but heavily armed steam yacht *Alert* of Dunedin, N. Z., which was sighted April 12th in S. Latitude 34° 21', W. Longitude 152° 17' with one living and one dead man aboard.

The *Vigilant* left Valparaiso March 25th, and on April 2 was driven considerably south of her course by exceptionally heavy storms and monster waves. On April 12th the derelict was sighted; and though apparently deserted, was found upon boarding to contain one survivor in a half-delirious condition and one man who had evidently been dead for more than a week. The living man was clutching a horrible stone idol of unknown origin, about a foot in height, regarding whose nature authorities at Sydney University, the Royal Society, and the Museum in College Street all profess complete bafflement, and which the survivor says he found in the cabin of the yacht, in a small carved shrine of common pattern.

This man, after recovering his senses, told an exceedingly strange story of piracy and slaughter. He is Gustaf Johansen, a Norwegian of some intelligence, and had been second mate of the two-masted schooner *Emma* of Auckland, which sailed for Callao February 20th with a complement of eleven men. The *Emma*, he says, was delayed and thrown widely south of her course by the great storm of March 1st, and on March 22nd, in S. Latitude $49^{\circ} 51'$, W. Longitude $128^{\circ} 34'$, encountered the *Alert*, manned by a queer and evil-looking crew of Kanakas and half-castes. Being ordered peremptorily to turn back, Capt. Collins refused; whereupon the strange crew began to fire savagely and without warning upon the schooner with a peculiarly heavy battery of brass cannon forming part of the yacht's equipment. The *Emma's* men showed fight, says the survivor, and though the schooner began to sink from shots beneath the waterline they managed to heave alongside their enemy and board her, grappling with the savage crew on the yacht's deck, and being forced to kill them all, the number being slightly superior, because of their particularly abhorrent and desperate though rather clumsy mode of fighting.

Three of the *Emma's* men, including Capt. Collins and First Mate Green, were killed; and the remaining eight under Second Mate Johansen proceeded to navigate the captured yacht, going ahead in their original direction to see if any reason for their ordering back had existed. The next day, it appears, they raised and landed on a small island, although none is known to exist in that part of the ocean; and six of the men somehow died ashore, though Johansen is queerly reticent about this part of his story, and speaks only of their falling into a rock chasm. Later, it seems, he and one companion boarded the yacht and tried to manage her, but were beaten about by the storm of April 2nd. From that time till his rescue on the 12th the man remembers little, and he does not even recall when William Briden, his companion, died. Briden's death reveals no apparent cause, and was probably due to excitement or exposure. Cable advices from Dunedin report that the *Alert* was well known there as an island trader, and bore an evil reputation along the waterfront. It was

owned by a curious group of half-castes whose frequent meetings and night trips to the woods attracted no little curiosity; and it had set sail in great haste just after the storm and earth tremors of March 1st. Our Auckland correspondent gives the *Emma* and her crew an excellent reputation, and Johansen is described as a sober and worthy man. The admiralty will institute an inquiry on the whole matter beginning to-morrow, at which every effort will be made to induce Johansen to speak more freely than he has done hitherto.

This was all, together with the picture of the hellish image; but what a train of ideas it started in my mind! Here were new treasures of data on the Cthulhu Cult, and evidence that it had strange interests at sea as well as on land. What motive prompted the hybrid crew to order back the *Emma* as they sailed about with their hideous idol? What was the unknown island on which six of the *Emma's* crew had died, and about which the mate Johansen was so secretive? What had the vice-admiralty's investigation brought out, and what was known of the noxious cult in Dunedin? And most marvelous of all, what deep and more than natural linkage of dates was this which gave a malign and now undeniable significance to the various turns of events so carefully noted by my uncle?

March 1st—our February 28th according to the International Date Line—the earthquake and storm had come. From Dunedin the *Alert* and her noisome crew had darted eagerly forth as if imperiously summoned, and on the other side of the earth poets and artists had begun to dream of a strange, dank Cyclopean city whilst a young sculptor had molded in his sleep the form of the dreaded Cthulhu. March 23d the crew of the *Emma* landed on an unknown island and left six men dead; and on that date the dreams of sensitive men assumed a heightened vividness and darkened with dread of a giant monster's malign pursuit, whilst an architect had gone mad and a sculptor had lapsed suddenly into

delirium! And what of this storm of April 2nd—the date on which all dreams of the dank city ceased, and Wilcox emerged unharmed from the bondage of strange fever? What of all this—and of those hints of old Castro about the sunken, star-born Old Ones and their coming reign; their faithful cult *and their mastery of dreams*? Was I tottering on the brink of cosmic horrors beyond man's power to bear? If so, they must be horrors of the mind alone, for in some way the second of April had put a stop to whatever monstrous menace had begun its siege of mankind's soul.

That evening, after a day of hurried cabling and arranging, I bade my host adieu and took a train for San Francisco. In less than a month I was in Dunedin; where, however, I found that little was known of the strange cult-members who had lingered in the old sea taverns. Waterfront scum was far too common for special mention; though there was vague talk about one inland trip these mongrels had made, during which faint drumming and red flame were noted on the distant hills. In Auckland I learned that Johansen had returned *with yellow hair turned white* after a perfunctory and inconclusive questioning at Sydney, and had thereafter sold his cottage in West Street and sailed with his wife to his old home in Oslo. Of his stirring experience he would tell his friends no more than he had told the admiralty officials, and all they could do was to give me his Oslo address.

After that I went to Sydney and talked profitlessly with seamen and members of the vice-admiralty court. I saw the *Alert*, now sold and in commercial use, at Circular Quay in Sydney Cove, but gained nothing from its non-committal bulk. The crouching image with its cuttlefish head, dragon body, scaly wings, and hieroglyphed pedestal was preserved in the Museum at Hyde Park; and I studied it long and well,

finding it a thing of balefully exquisite workmanship, and with the same utter mystery, terrible antiquity, and unearthly strangeness of material which I had noted in Legrasse's smaller specimen. Geologists, the curator told me, had found it a monstrous puzzle; for they vowed that the world held no rock like it. Then I thought with a shudder of what old Castro had told Legrasse about the primal Great Ones: "They had come from the stars, and had brought Their images with Them."

Shaken with such a mental revolution as I had never before known, I now resolved to visit Mate Johansen in Oslo. Sailing for London, I reëmbarked at once for the Norwegian capital; and one autumn day landed at the trim wharves in the shadow of the Egeberg. Johansen's address, I discovered, lay in the Old Town of King Harold Haardrada, which kept alive the name of Oslo during all the centuries that the greater city masqueraded as "Christiania." I made the brief trip by taxicab, and knocked with palpitant heart at the door of a neat and ancient building with plastered front. A sad-faced woman in black answered my summons, and I was stung with disappointment when she told me in halting English that Gustaf Johansen was no more.

He had not long survived his return, said his wife, for the doings at sea in 1925 had broken him. He had told her no more than he had told the public, but had left a long manuscript—of "technical matters" as he said—written in English, evidently in order to safeguard her from the peril of casual perusal. During a walk through a narrow lane near the Gothenburg dock, a bundle of papers falling from an attic window had knocked him down. Two Lascar sailors at once helped him to his feet, but before the ambulance could reach him he was dead. Physicians found no adequate cause

for the end, and laid it to heart trouble and a weakened constitution.

I now felt gnawing at my vitals that dark terror which will never leave me till I, too, am at rest; "accidentally" or otherwise. Persuading the widow that my connection with her husband's "technical matters" was sufficient to entitle me to his manuscript, I bore the document away and began to read it on the London boat. It was a simple, rambling thing—a naïve sailor's effort at a post-facto diary—and strove to recall day by day that last awful voyage. I cannot attempt to transcribe it verbatim in all its cloudiness and redundancy, but I will tell its gist enough to show why the sound of the water against the vessel's sides became so unendurable to me that I stopped my ears with cotton.

Johansen, thank God, did not know quite all, even though he saw the city and the Thing, but I shall never sleep calmly again when I think of the horrors that lurk ceaselessly behind life in time and in space, and of those unhallowed blasphemies from elder stars which dream beneath the sea, known and favored by a nightmare cult ready and eager to loose them on the world whenever another earthquake shall heave their monstrous stone city again to the sun and air.

Johansen's voyage had begun just as he told it to the vice-admiralty. The *Emma*, in ballast, had cleared Auckland on February 20th, and had felt the full force of that earthquake-born tempest which must have heaved up from the seabottom the horrors that filled men's dreams. Once more under control, the ship was making good progress when held up by the *Alert* on March 22nd, and I could feel the mate's regret as he wrote of her bombardment and sinking. Of the swarthy cult-fiends on the *Alert* he speaks with significant horror. There was some peculiarly abominable quality about them which made their destruction seem almost a duty, and

Johansen shows ingenuous wonder at the charge of ruthlessness brought against his party during the proceedings of the court of inquiry. Then, driven ahead by curiosity in their captured yacht under Johansen's command, the men sight a great stone pillar sticking out of the sea, and in S. Latitude $47^{\circ} 9'$, W. Longitude $126^{\circ} 43'$ come upon a coastline of mingled mud, ooze, and weedy Cyclopean masonry which can be nothing less than the tangible substance of earth's supreme terror—the nightmare corpse-city of R'lyeh, that was built in measureless æons behind history by the vast, loathsome shapes that seeped down from the dark stars. There lay great Cthulhu and his hordes, hidden in green slimy vaults and sending out at last, after cycles incalculable, the thoughts that spread fear to the dreams of the sensitive and called imperiously to the faithful to come on a pilgrimage of liberation and restoration. All this Johansen did not suspect, but God knows he soon saw enough!

I suppose that only a single mountain-top, the hideous monolith-crowned citadel whereon great Cthulhu was buried, actually emerged from the waters. When I think of the *extent* of all that may be brooding down there I almost wish to kill myself forthwith. Johansen and his men were awed by the cosmic majesty of this dripping Babylon of elder dæmons, and must have guessed without guidance that it was nothing of this or of any sane planet. Awe at the unbelievable size of the greenish stone blocks, at the dizzying height of the great carven monolith, and at the stupefying identity of the colossal statues and bas-reliefs with the queer image found in the shrine on the *Alert*, is poignantly visible in every line of the mate's frightened description.

Without knowing what futurism is like, Johansen achieved something very close to it when he spoke of the city; for instead of describing any definite structure or

building, he dwells only on broad impressions of vast angles and stone surfaces—surfaces too great to belong to anything right or proper for this earth, and impious with horrible images and hieroglyphs. I mention his talk about *angles* because it suggests something Wilcox had told me of his awful dreams. He had said that the *geometry* of the dream-place he saw was abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathsomely redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours. Now an unlettered seaman felt the same thing whilst gazing at the terrible reality.

Johansen and his men landed at a sloping mud-bank on this monstrous Acropolis, and clambered slipperily up over titan oozy blocks which could have been no mortal staircase. The very sun of heaven seemed distorted when viewed through the polarizing miasma welling out from this sea-soaked perversion, and twisted menace and suspense lurked leeringly in those crazily elusive angles of carven rock where a second glance showed concavity after the first showed convexity.

Something very like fright had come over all the explorers before anything more definite than rock and ooze and weed was seen. Each would have fled had he not feared the scorn of the others, and it was only half-heartedly that they searched—vainly, as it proved—for some portable souvenir to bear away.

It was Rodriguez the Portuguese who climbed up to the foot of the monolith and shouted of what he had found. The rest followed him, and looked curiously at the immense carved door with the now familiar squid-dragon bas-relief. It was, Johansen said, like a great barn-door; and they all felt that it was a door because of the ornate lintel, threshold, and jambs around it, though they could not decide whether it lay flat like a trap-door or slantwise like an outside cellar-

door. As Wilcox would have said, the geometry of the place was all wrong. One could not be sure that the sea and the ground were horizontal, hence the relative position of everything else seemed phantasmally variable.

Briden pushed at the stone in several places without result. Then Donovan felt over it delicately around the edge, pressing each point separately as he went. He climbed interminably along the grotesque stone molding—that is, one would call it climbing if the thing was not after all horizontal—and the men wondered how any door in the universe could be so vast. Then, very softly and slowly, the acre-great panel began to give inward at the top; and they saw that it was balanced. Donovan slid or somehow propelled himself down or along the jamb and rejoined his fellows, and everyone watched the queer recession of the monstrously carven portal. In this phantasy of prismatic distortion it moved anomalously in a diagonal way, so that all the rules of matter and perspective seemed upset.

The aperture was black with a darkness almost material. That tenebrousness was, indeed, a *positive quality*; for it obscured such parts of the inner walls as ought to have been revealed, and actually burst forth like smoke from its æon-long imprisonment, visibly darkening the sun as it slunk away into the shrunken and gibbous sky on flapping membranous wings. The odor arising from the newly opened depths was intolerable, and at length the quick-eared Hawkins thought he heard a nasty, slopping sound down there. Everyone listened, and everyone was listening still when It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed Its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway into the tainted outside air of that poison city of madness.

Poor Johansen's handwriting almost gave out when he wrote of this. Of the six men who never reached the ship,

he thinks two perished of pure fright in that accursed instant. The Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillions of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight.

Three men were swept up by the flabby claws before anybody turned. God rest them, if there be any rest in the universe. They were Donovan, Guerrera, and Angstrom. Parker slipped as the other three were plunging frenziedly over endless vistas of green-crustled rock to the boat, and Johansen swears he was swallowed up by an angle of masonry which shouldn't have been there; an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse. So only Briden and Johansen reached the boat, and pulled desperately for the *Alert* as the mountainous monstrosity flopped down the slimy stones and hesitated floundering at the edge of the water.

Steam had not been suffered to go down entirely, despite the departure of all hands for the shore; and it was the work of only a few moments of feverish rushing up and down between wheel and engines to get the *Alert* under way. Slowly, amidst the distorted horrors of that indescribable scene, she began to churn the lethal waters; whilst on the masonry of that charnel shore that was not of earth the titan Thing from the stars slavered and gibbered like Polypheme cursing the fleeing ship of Odysseus. Then, bolder than the storied Cyclops, great Cthulhu slid greasily into the water and be-

gan to pursue with vast wave-raising strokes of cosmic potency. Briden looked back and went mad, laughing shrilly, as he kept on laughing at intervals till death found him one night in the cabin whilst Johansen was wandering deliriously.

But Johansen had not given out yet. Knowing that the Thing could surely overtake the *Alert* until steam was fully up, he resolved on a desperate chance; and, setting the engine for full speed, ran lightning-like on deck and reversed the wheel. There was a mighty eddying and foaming in the noisome brine, and as the steam mounted higher and higher the brave Norwegian drove his vessel head on against the pursuing jelly which rose above the unclean froth like the stern of a dæmon galleon. The awful squid-head with writhing feelers came nearly up to the bowsprit of the sturdy yacht, but Johansen drove on relentlessly. There was a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves, and a sound that the chronicler would not put on paper. For an instant the ship was befouled by an acrid and blinding green cloud, and then there was only a venomous seething astern; where—God in Heaven!—the scattered plasticity of that nameless sky-spawn was nebulously *recombining* in its hateful original form, whilst its distance widened every second as the *Alert* gained impetus from its mounting steam.

That was all. After that Johansen only brooded over the idol in the cabin and attended to a few matters of food for himself and the laughing maniac by his side. He did not try to navigate after the first bold flight, for the reaction had taken something out of his soul. Then came the storm of April 2nd, and a gathering of the clouds about his consciousness. There is a sense of spectral whirling through liquid gulfs of infinity, of dizzying rides through reeling universes

on a comet's tail, and of hysterical plunges from the pit to the moon and from the moon back again to the pit, all livened by a cachinnating chorus of the distorted, hilarious elder gods and the bat-winged mocking imps of Tartarus.

Out of that dream came rescue—the *Vigilant*, the vice-admiralty court, the streets of Dunedin, and the long voyage back home to the old house by the Egeberg. He could not tell—they would think him mad. He would write of what he knew before death came, but his wife must not guess.

That was the document I read, and now I have placed it in the tin box beside the bas-relief and the papers of Professor Angell. With it shall go this record of mine—this test of my own sanity, wherein is pieced together that which I hope may never be pieced together again. I have looked upon all that the universe has to hold of horror, and even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison to me. But I do not think my life will be long. As my uncle went, as poor Johansen went, so I shall go. I know too much, and the cult still lives.

Cthulhu still lives, too, I suppose, again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more, for the *Vigilant* sailed over the spot after the April storm; but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or else the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men. A time will come—but I must not and cannot think! Let me pray that, if I do not survive this manuscript, my executors may put caution before audacity and see that it meets no other eye.

NOVEL OF THE WHITE POWDER

BY ARTHUR MACHEN

My name is Leicester; my father, Major-General Wyn Leicester, a distinguished officer of artillery, succumbed five years ago to a complicated liver complaint acquired in the deadly climate of India. A year later my only brother, Francis, came home after an exceptionally brilliant career at the University, and settled down with the resolution of a hermit to master what has been well called the great legend of the law. He was a man who seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure; and though he was handsomer than most men, and could talk as merrily and wittily as if he were a mere vagabond, he avoided society, and shut himself up in a large room at the top of the house to make himself a lawyer. Ten hours a day of hard reading was at first his allotted portion; from the first light in the east to the late afternoon he remained shut up with his books, taking a hasty half-hour's lunch with me as if he grudged the wasting of the moments, and going out for a short walk when it began to grow dusk. I thought that such relentless application must be injurious, and tried to cajole him from the crabbed text-books, but his ardor seemed to grow rather than diminish, and his daily tale of hours increased. I spoke to him seriously, suggesting some occasional relaxation, if it were but an idle afternoon with a harmless novel; but he laughed, and said that he read about feudal tenures when he felt in need of amusement, and scoffed at the notions of

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theaters, or a month's fresh air. I confessed that he looked well, and seemed not to suffer from his labors, but I knew that such unnatural toil would take revenge at last, and I was not mistaken. A look of anxiety began to lurk about his eyes, and he seemed languid, and at last he avowed that he was no longer in perfect health; he was troubled, he said, with a sensation of dizziness, and awoke now and then of nights from fearful dreams, terrified and cold with icy sweats. "I am taking care of myself," he said, "so you must not trouble; I passed the whole of yesterday afternoon in idleness, leaning back in that comfortable chair you gave me, and scribbling nonsense on a sheet of paper. No, no; I will not overdo my work; I shall be well enough in a week or two, depend upon it."

Yet in spite of his assurances I could see that he grew no better, but rather worse; he would enter the drawing-room with a face all miserably wrinkled and despondent, and endeavor to look gayly when my eyes fell on him, and I thought such symptoms of evil omen, and was frightened sometimes at the nervous irritation of his movements, and at glances which I could not decipher. Much against his will, I prevailed on him to have medical advice, and with an ill grace he called in our old doctor.

Dr. Haberdon cheered me after examination of his patient.

"There is nothing really much amiss," he said to me. "No doubt he reads too hard and eats hastily, and then goes back again to his books in too great a hurry, and the natural sequence is some digestive trouble and a little mischief in the nervous system. But I think—I do, indeed, Miss Leicester—that we shall be able to set this all right. I have written him a prescription which ought to do great things. So you have no cause for anxiety."

My brother insisted on having the prescription made up by a chemist in the neighborhood. It was an odd, old-fashioned shop, devoid of the studied coquetry and calculated glitter that make so gay a show on the counters and shelves of the modern apothecary; but Francis liked the old chemist, and believed in the scrupulous purity of his drugs. The medicine was sent in due course, and I saw that my brother took it regularly after lunch and dinner. It was an innocent-looking white powder, of which a little was dissolved in a glass of cold water; I stirred it in, and it seemed to disappear, leaving the water clear and colorless. At first Francis seemed to benefit greatly; the weariness vanished from his face, and he became more cheerful than he had ever been since the time when he left school; he talked gayly of reforming himself, and avowed to me that he had wasted his time.

“I have given too many hours to law,” he said, laughing; “I think you have saved me in the nick of time. Come, I shall be Lord Chancellor yet, but I must not forget life. You and I will have a holiday together before long; we will go to Paris and enjoy ourselves, and keep away from the Bibliothèque Nationale.”

I confessed myself delighted with the prospect.

“When shall we go?” I said. “I can start the day after to-morrow if you like.”

“Ah! that is perhaps a little too soon; after all, I do not know London yet, and I suppose a man ought to give the pleasures of his own country the first choice. But we will go off together in a week or two, so try and furbish up your French. I only know law French myself, and I am afraid that woudn’t do.”

We were just finishing dinner, and he quaffed off his medi-

cine with a parade of carousal as if it had been wine from some choicest bin.

“Has it any particular taste?” I said.

“No; I should not know I was not drinking water,” and he got up from his chair and began to pace up and down the room as if he were undecided as to what he should do next.

“Shall we have coffee in the drawing-room?” I said; “or would you like to smoke?”

“No, I think I will take a turn; it seems a pleasant evening. Look at the afterglow; why, it is as if a great city were burning in flames, and down there between the dark houses it is raining blood fast. Yes, I will go out; I may be in soon, but I shall take my key; so good-night, dear, if I don’t see you again.”

The door slammed behind him, and I saw him walk lightly down the street, swinging his malacca cane, and I felt grateful to Dr. Haberdon for such an improvement.

I believe my brother came home very late that night, but he was in a merry mood the next morning.

“I walked on without thinking where I was going,” he said, “enjoying the freshness of the air, and livened by the crowds as I reached more frequented quarters. And then I met an old college friend, Orford, in the press of the pavement, and then—well, we enjoyed ourselves. I have felt what it is to be young and a man! I find I have blood in my veins, as other men have. I made an appointment with Orford for to-night; there will be a little party of us at the restaurant. Yes; I shall enjoy myself for a week or two, and hear the chimes at midnight, and then we will go for our little trip together.”

Such was the transmutation of my brother’s character that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless

and merry idler of western pavements, a hunter out of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before my eyes, and said no more of Paris, for he had clearly found his paradise in London. I rejoiced, and yet wondered a little; for there was, I thought, something in his gayety that indefinitely displeased me, though I could not have defined my feeling. But by degrees there came a change; he returned still in the cold hours of the morning, but I heard no more about his pleasures, and one morning as we sat at breakfast together I looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger before me.

“Oh, Francis!” I cried. “Oh, Francis, Francis, what have you done?” and rending sobs cut the words short. I went weeping out of the room; for though I knew nothing, yet I knew all, and by some odd play of thought I remembered the evening when he first went abroad, and the picture of the sunset sky glowed before me; the clouds like a city in burning flames, and the rain of blood. Yet I did battle with such thoughts, resolving that perhaps, after all, no great harm had been done, and in the evening at dinner I resolved to press him to fix a day for our holiday in Paris. We had talked easily enough, and my brother had just taken his medicine, which he continued all the while. I was about to begin my topic when the words forming in my mind vanished, and I wondered for a second what icy and intolerable weight oppressed my heart and suffocated me as with the unutterable horror of the coffin-lid nailed down on the living.

We had dined without candles; the room had slowly grown from twilight to gloom, and the walls and corners were indistinct in the shadow. But from where I sat I looked out into the street; and as I thought of what I would say to Francis, the sky began to flush and shine, as it had done on a well-remembered evening, and in the gap between two dark

masses that were houses an awful pageantry of flame appeared—lurid whorls of writhed cloud, and utter depths burning, gray masses like the fume blown from a smoking city, and an evil glory blazing far above shot with tongues of more ardent fire, and below as if there were a deep pool of blood. I looked down to where my brother sat facing me, and the words were shaped on my lips, when I saw his hand resting on the table. Between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand there was a mark, a small patch about the size of a sixpence, and somewhat of the color of a bad bruise. Yet, by some sense I cannot define, I knew that what I saw was no bruise at all; oh! if human flesh could burn with flame, and if flame could be black as pitch, such was that before me. Without thought or fashioning of words gray horror shaped within me at the sight, and in an inner cell it was known to be a brand. For the moment the stained sky became dark as midnight, and when the light returned to me I was alone in the silent room, and soon after I heard my brother go out.

Late as it was, I put on my hat and went to Dr. Haberdan, and in his great consulting room, ill lighted by a candle which the doctor brought in with him, with stammering lips, and a voice that would break in spite of my resolve, I told him all, from the day on which my brother began to take the medicine down to the dreadful thing I had seen scarcely half an hour before.

When I had done, the doctor looked at me for a minute with an expression of great pity on his face.

“My dear Miss Leicester,” he said, “you have evidently been anxious about your brother; you have been worrying over him, I am sure. Come, now, is it not so?”

“I have certainly been anxious,” I said. “For the last week or two I have not felt at ease.”

"Quite so; you know, of course, what a queer thing the brain is?"

"I understand what you mean; but I was not deceived. I saw what I have told you with my own eyes."

"Yes, yes, of course. But your eyes had been staring at that very curious sunset we had to-night. That is the only explanation. You will see it in the proper light to-morrow, I am sure. But, remember, I am always ready to give any help that is in my power; do not scruple to come to me, or to send for me if you are in any distress."

I went away but little comforted, all confusion and terror and sorrow, not knowing where to turn. When my brother and I met the next day, I looked quickly at him, and noticed, with a sickening at heart, that the right hand, the hand on which I had clearly seen the patch as of a black fire, was wrapped up with a handkerchief.

"What is the matter with your hand, Francis?" I said in a steady voice.

"Nothing of consequence. I cut a finger last night, and it bled rather awkwardly. So I did it up roughly to the best of my ability."

"I will do it neatly for you, if you like."

"No, thank you, dear; this will answer very well. Suppose we have breakfast; I am quite hungry."

We sat down and I watched him. He scarcely ate or drank at all, but tossed his meat to the dog when he thought my eyes were turned away; there was a look in his eyes that I had never yet seen, and the thought flashed across my mind that it was a look that was scarcely human. I was firmly convinced that awful and incredible as was the thing I had seen the night before, yet it was no illusion, no glamour of bewildered sense, and in the course of the evening I went again to the doctor's house.

He shook his head with an air puzzled and incredulous, and seemed to reflect for a few minutes.

"And you say he still keeps up the medicine? But why? As I understand, all the symptoms he complained of have disappeared long ago; why should he go on taking the stuff when he is quite well? And by the by, where did he get it made up? At Sayce's? I never send any one there; the old man is getting careless. Suppose you come with me to the chemist's; I should like to have some talk with him."

We walked together to the shop; old Sayce knew Dr. Haberdon, and was quite ready to give any information.

"You have been sending that in to Mr. Leicester for some weeks, I think, on my prescription," said the doctor, giving the old man a penciled scrap of paper.

The chemist put on his great spectacles with trembling uncertainty, and held up the paper with a shaking hand.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I have very little of it left; it is rather an uncommon drug, and I have had it in stock some time. I must get in some more, if Mr. Leicester goes on with it."

"Kindly let me have a look at the stuff," said Haberdon, and the chemist gave him a glass bottle. He took out the stopper and smelt the contents, and looked strangely at the old man.

"Where did you get this?" he said, "and what is it? For one thing, Mr. Sayce, it is not what I prescribed. Yes, yes, I see the label is right enough, but I tell you this is not the drug."

"I have had it a long time," said the old man in feeble terror; "I got it from Burbage's in the usual way. It is not prescribed often, and I have had it on the shelf for some years. You see there is very little left."

"You had better give it to me," said Haberdon. "I am afraid something wrong has happened."

We went out of the shop in silence, the doctor carrying the bottle neatly wrapped in paper under his arm.

“Dr. Haberden,” I said, when we had walked a little way—“Dr. Haberden.”

“Yes,” he said, looking at me gloomily enough.

“I should like you to tell me what my brother has been taking twice a day for the last month or so.”

“Frankly, Miss Leicester, I don’t know. We will speak of this when we get to my house.”

We walked on quickly without another word till we reached Dr. Haberden’s. He asked me to sit down, and began pacing up and down the room, his face clouded over, as I could see, with no common fears.

“Well,” he said at length, “this is all very strange; it is only natural that you should feel alarmed, and I must confess that my mind is far from easy. We will put aside, if you please, what you told me last night and this morning, but the fact remains that for the last few weeks Mr. Leicester has been impregnating his system with a drug which is completely unknown to me. I tell you, it is not what I ordered; and what the stuff in the bottle really is remains to be seen.”

He undid the wrapper, and cautiously tilted a few grains of the white powder on to a piece of paper, and peered curiously at it.

“Yes,” he said, “it is like the sulphate of quinine, as you say; it is flaky. But smell it.”

He held the bottle to me, and I bent over it. It was a strange, sickly smell, vaporous and overpowering, like some strong anæsthetic.

“I shall have it analyzed,” said Haberden; “I have a friend who has devoted his whole life to chemistry as a science. Then we shall have something to go upon. No, no;

say no more about that other matter; I cannot listen to that; and take my advice and think no more about it yourself."

That evening my brother did not go out as usual after dinner.

"I have had my fling," he said with a queer laugh, "and I must go back to my old ways. A little law will be quite a relaxation after so sharp a dose of pleasure," and he grinned to himself, and soon after went up to his room. His hand was still all bandaged.

Dr. Haberden called a few days later.

"I have no special news to give you," he said. "Chambers is out of town, so I know no more about that stuff than you do. But I should like to see Mr. Leicester, if he is in."

"He is in his room," I said; "I will tell him you are here."

"No, no, I will go up to him; we will have a little quiet talk together. I dare say that we have made a good deal of fuss about a very little; for, after all, whatever the powder may be, it seems to have done him good."

The doctor went upstairs, and standing in the hall I heard his knock, and the opening and shutting of the door; and then I waited in the silent house for an hour, and the stillness grew more and more intense as the hands of the clock crept round. Then there sounded from above the noise of a door shut sharply, and the doctor was coming down the stairs. His footsteps crossed the hall, and there was a pause at the door; I drew a long, sick breath with difficulty, and saw my face white in a little mirror, and he came in and stood at the door. There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, his lower lip trembled like a horse's, and he gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke.

"I have seen that man," he began in a dry whisper. "I have been sitting in his presence for the last hour. My God! And I am alive and in my senses! I, who have dealt with death all my life, and have dabbled with the melting ruins of the earthly tabernacle. But not this, oh! not this," and he covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the sight of something before him.

"Do not send for me again, Miss Leicester," he said with more composure. "I can do nothing in this house. Good-by."

As I watched him totter down the steps, and along the pavement towards his house, it seemed to me that he had aged by ten years since the morning.

My brother remained in his room. He called out to me in a voice I hardly recognized that he was very busy, and would like his meals brought to his door and left there, and I gave the order to the servants. From that day it seemed as if the arbitrary conception we call time had been annihilated for me; I lived in an ever-present sense of horror, going through the routine of the house mechanically, and only speaking a few necessary words to the servants. Now and then I went out and paced the streets for an hour or two and came home again; but whether I were without or within, my spirit delayed before the closed door of the upper room, and, shuddering, waited for it to open. I have said that I scarcely reckoned time; but I suppose it must have been a fortnight after Dr. Haberdens's visit that I came home from my stroll a little refreshed and lightened. The air was sweet and pleasant, and the hazy form of green leaves, floating cloud-like in the square, and the smell of blossoms, had charmed my senses, and I felt happier and walked more briskly. As I delayed a moment at the verge of the pavement, waiting for a van to pass by before crossing over to the house, I hap-

pened to look up at the windows, and instantly there was the rush and swirl of deep cold waters in my ears, my heart leapt up and fell down, down as into a deep hollow, and I was amazed with a dread and terror without form or shape. I stretched out a hand blindly through the folds of thick darkness, from the black and shadowy valley, and held myself from falling, while the stones beneath my feet rocked and swayed and tilted, and the sense of solid things seemed to sink away from under me. I had glanced up at the window of my brother's study, and at that moment the blind was drawn aside, and something that had life stared out into the world. Nay, I cannot say I saw a face or any human likeness; a living thing, two eyes of burning flame glared at me, and they were in the midst of something as formless as my fear, the symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption. I stood shuddering and quaking as with the grip of ague, sick with unspeakable agonies of fear and loathing, and for five minutes I could not summon force or motion to my limbs. When I was within the door, I ran up the stairs to my brother's room and knocked.

"Francis, Francis," I cried, "for Heaven's sake, answer me. What is the horrible thing in your room? Cast it out, Francis; cast it from you."

I heard a noise as of feet shuffling slowly and awkwardly, and a choking, gurgling sound, as if some one was struggling to find utterance, and then the noise of a voice, broken and stifled, and words that I could scarcely understand.

"There is nothing here," the voice said. "Pray do not disturb me. I am not very well to-day."

I turned away horrified, and yet helpless. I could do nothing, and I wondered why Francis had lied to me, for I had seen the appearance beyond the glass too plainly to be deceived, though it was but the sight of a moment. And I sat

still, conscious that there had been something else, something I had seen in the first flash of terror, before those burning eyes had looked at me. Suddenly I remembered; as I lifted my face the blind was being drawn back, and I had had an instant's glance of the thing that was moving it, and in my recollection I knew that a hideous image was engraved forever on my brain. It was not a hand; there were no fingers that held the blind, but a black stump pushed it aside, the mouldering outline and the clumsy movement as of a beast's paw had glowed into my senses before the darkling waves of terror had overwhelmed me as I went down quick into the pit. My mind was aghast at the thought of this, and of the awful presence that dwelt with my brother in his room; I went to his door and cried to him again, but no answer came. That night one of the servants came up to me and told me in a whisper that for three days food had been regularly placed at the door and left untouched; the maid had knocked but had received no answer; she had heard the noise of shuffling feet that I had noticed. Day after day went by, and still my brother's meals were brought to his door and left untouched; and though I knocked and called again and again, I could get no answer. The servants began to talk to me; it appeared they were as alarmed as I; the cook said that when my brother first shut himself up in his room she used to hear him come out at night and go about the house; and once, she said, the hall door had opened and closed again, but for several nights she had heard no sound. The climax came at last; it was in the dusk of the evening, and I was sitting in the darkening dreary room when a terrible shriek jarred and rang harshly out of the silence, and I heard a frightened scurry of feet dashing down the stairs. I waited, and the servant-maid staggered into the room and faced me, white and trembling.

"Oh, Miss Helen!" she whispered; "oh! for the Lord's sake, Miss Helen, what has happened? Look at my hand, miss; look at that hand!"

I drew her to the window, and saw there was a black wet stain upon her hand.

"I do not understand you," I said. "Will you explain to me?"

"I was doing your room just now," she began. "I was turning down the bed-clothes, and all of a sudden there was something fell upon my hand, wet, and I looked up, and the ceiling was black and dripping on me."

I looked hard at her and bit my lip.

"Come with me," I said. "Bring your candle with you."

The room I slept in was beneath my brother's, and as I went in I felt I was trembling. I looked up at the ceiling, and saw a patch, all black and wet, and a dew of black drops upon it, and a pool of horrible liquor soaking into the white bed-clothes.

I ran upstairs and knocked loudly.

"Oh, Francis, Francis, my dear brother," I cried, "what has happened to you?"

And I listened. There was a sound of choking, and a noise like water bubbling and regurgitating, but nothing else, and I called louder, but no answer came.

In spite of what Dr. Haberdon had said, I went to him; with tears streaming down my cheeks I told him all that had happened, and he listened to me with a face set hard and grim.

"For your father's sake," he said at last, "I will go with you, though I can do nothing."

We went out together; the streets were dark and silent, and heavy with heat and a drought of many weeks. I saw

the doctor's face white under the gas-lamps, and when we reached the house his hand was shaking.

We did not hesitate, but went upstairs directly. I held the lamp, and he called out in a loud, determined voice---

"Mr. Leicester, do you hear me? I insist on seeing you. Answer me at once."

There was no answer, but we both heard that choking noise I have mentioned.

"Mr. Leicester, I am waiting for you. Open the door this instant, or I shall break it down." And he called a third time in a voice that rang and echoed from the walls---

"Mr. Leicester! For the last time I order you to open the door."

"Ah!" he said, after a pause of heavy silence, "we are wasting time here. Will you be so kind as to get me a poker, or something of the kind?"

I ran into a little room at the back where odd articles were kept, and found a heavy adze-like tool that I thought might serve the doctor's purpose.

"Very good," he said, "that will do, I dare say. I give you notice, Mr. Leicester," he cried loudly at the keyhole, "that I am now about to break into your room."

Then I heard the wrench of the adze, and the wood-work split and cracked under it; with a loud crash the door suddenly burst open; and for a moment we started back aghast at a fearful screaming cry, no human voice, but as the roar of a monster, that burst forth inarticulate and struck at us out of the darkness.

"Hold the lamp," said the doctor, and we went in and glanced quickly round the room.

"There it is," said Dr. Haberdén, drawing a quick breath; "look, in that corner."

I looked, and a pang of horror seized my heart as with

a white-hot iron. There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points; he drove in the weapon, and struck again and again in the fury of loathing.

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A week or two later, when I had recovered to some extent from the terrible shock, Dr. Haberdén came to see me.

“I have sold my practice,” he began, “and to-morrow I am sailing on a long voyage. I do not know whether I shall ever return to England; in all probability I shall buy a little land in California, and settle there for the remainder of my life. I have brought you this packet, which you may open and read when you feel able to do so. It contains the report of Dr. Chambers on what I submitted to him. Good-by. Miss Leicester, good-by.”

When he was gone I opened the envelope; I could not wait, and proceeded to read the papers within. Here is the manuscript, and if you will allow me, I will read you the astounding story it contains.

“My dear Haberdén,” the letter began, “I have delayed inexcusably in answering your questions as to the white substance you sent me. To tell you the truth, I have hesitated for some time as to what course I should adopt, for there is a bigotry and orthodox standard in physical science as in theology, and I knew that if I told you the truth I should offend rooted prejudices which I once held dear myself.

However, I have determined to be plain with you, and first I must enter into a short personal explanation.

“You have known me, Haberdens, for many years as a scientific man; you and I have often talked of our profession together, and discussed the hopeless gulf that opens before the feet of those who think to attain to truth by any means whatsoever except the beaten way of experiment and observation in the sphere of material things. I remember the scorn with which you have spoken to me of men of science who have dabbled a little in the unseen, and have timidly hinted that perhaps the senses are not, after all, the eternal, impenetrable bounds of all knowledge, the everlasting walls beyond which no human being has ever passed. We have laughed together heartily, and I think justly, at the occult follies of the day, disguised under various names—the mesmerisms, spiritualisms, materializations, theosophies, all the rabble rout of imposture, with their machinery of poor tricks and feeble conjuring, the true back-parlor of shabby London streets. Yet, in spite of what I have said, I must confess to you that I am no materialist, taking the word of course in its usual signification. It is now many years since I have convinced myself—convinced myself, a sceptic, remember—that the old iron-bound theory is utterly and entirely false. Perhaps this confession will not wound you so sharply as it would have done twenty years ago; for I think you cannot have failed to notice that for some time hypotheses have been advanced by men of pure science which are nothing less than transcendental, and I suspect that most modern chemists and biologists of repute would not hesitate to subscribe the *dictum* of the old Schoolman, *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*, which means, I take it, that every branch of human knowledge if traced up to its source and final principles vanishes into mystery. I need not trouble you now with a de-

tailed account of the painful steps which led me to my conclusions; a few simple experiments suggested a doubt as to my then standpoint, and a train of thought that rose from circumstances comparatively trifling brought me far; my old conception of the universe has been swept away, and I stand in a world that seems as strange and awful to me as the endless waves of the ocean seen for the first time, shining, from a peak in Darien. Now I know that the walls of sense that seemed so impenetrable, that seemed to loom up above the heavens and to be founded below the depths, and to shut us in forevermore, are no such everlasting impassable barriers as we fancied, but thinnest and most airy veils that melt away before the seeker, and dissolve as the early mist of the morning about the brooks. I know that you never adopted the extreme materialistic position; you did not go about trying to prove a universal negative, for your logical sense withheld you from that crowning absurdity; but I am sure that you will find all that I am saying strange and repellent to your habits of thought. Yet, Haberden, what I tell you is the truth, nay, to adopt our common language, the sole and scientific truth, verified by experience; and the universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream. The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

“You will perhaps wonder, Haberden, whence all this tends; but I think a little thought will make it clear. You will understand that from such a standpoint the whole view of things is changed, and what we thought incredible and absurd may be possible enough. In short, we must look at le-

gend and belief with other eyes, and be prepared to accept tales that had become mere fables. Indeed, this is no such great demand. After all, modern science will concede as much, in a hypocritical manner; you must not, it is true, believe in witchcraft, but you may credit hypnotism; ghosts are out of date, but there is a good deal to be said for the theory of telepathy. Give superstition a Greek name, and believe in it, should almost be a proverb.

“So much for my personal explanation. You sent me, Haberdan, a phial, stoppered and sealed, containing a small quantity of flaky white powder, obtained from a chemist who has been dispensing it to one of your patients. I am not surprised to hear that this powder refused to yield any results to your analysis. It is a substance which was known to a few many hundred years ago, but which I never expected to have submitted to me from the shop of a modern apothecary. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the man’s tale; he no doubt got, as he says, the rather uncommon salt you prescribed from the wholesale chemist’s; and it has probably remained on his shelf for twenty years, or perhaps longer. Here what we call chance and coincidence begin to work; during all these years the salt in the bottle was exposed to certain recurring variations of temperature, variations probably ranging from 40° to 80° . And, as it happens, such changes, recurring year after year at irregular intervals, and with varying degrees of intensity and duration, have constituted a process, and a process so complicated and so delicate, that I question whether modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision could produce the same result. The white powder you sent me is something very different from the drug you prescribed; it is the powder from which the wine of the Sabbath, the *Vinum Sabbati*, was prepared. No doubt you have read of the

Witches' Sabbath, and have laughed at the tales which terrified our ancestors; the black cats, and the broomsticks, and dooms pronounced against some old woman's cow. Since I have known the truth I have often reflected that it is on the whole a happy thing that such burlesque as this is believed, for it serves to conceal much that it is better should not be known generally. However, if you care to read the appendix to Payne Knight's monograph, you will find that the true Sabbath was something very different, though the writer has very nicely refrained from printing all he knew. The secrets of the true Sabbath were the secrets of remote times surviving into the Middle Ages, secrets of an evil science which existed long before Aryan man entered Europe. Men and women, seduced from their homes on specious pretenses, were met by beings well qualified to assume, as they did assume, the part of devils, and taken by their guides to some desolate and lonely place, known to the initiate by long tradition, and unknown to all else. Perhaps it was a cave in some bare and wind-swept hill, perhaps some inmost recess of a great forest, and there the Sabbath was held. There, in the blackest hour of night, the *Vinum Sabbati* was prepared, and this evil graal was poured forth and offered to the neophytes, and they partook of an infernal sacrament; *sumentes calicem principis inferorum*, as an old author well expresses it. And suddenly, each one that had drunk found himself attended by a companion, a shape of glamour and unearthly allurements, beckoning him apart, to share in joys more exquisite, more piercing than the thrill of any dream, to the consummation of the marriage of the Sabbath. It is hard to write of such things as these, and chiefly because that shape that allured with loveliness was no hallucination, but, awful as it is to express, the man himself. By the power of that Sabbath wine, a few grains of

white powder thrown into a glass of water, the house of life was riven asunder and the human trinity dissolved, and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within us all, was made tangible and an external thing, and clothed with a garment of flesh. And then, in the hour of midnight, the primal fall was repeated and re-presented, and the awful thing veiled in the mythos of the Tree in the Garden was done anew. Such was the *nuptiæ Sabbati*.

“I prefer to say no more; you, Haberden, know as well as I do that the most trivial laws of life are not to be broken with impunity; and for so terrible an act as this, in which the very inmost place of the temple was broken open and defiled, a terrible vengeance followed. What began with corruption ended also with corruption.”

Underneath is the following in Dr. Harberden’s writing:—

“The whole of the above is unfortunately strictly and entirely true. Your brother confessed all to me on that morning when I saw him in his room. My attention was first attracted to the bandaged hand, and I forced him to show it me. What I saw made me, a medical man of many years’ standing, grow sick with loathing, and the story I was forced to listen to was infinitely more frightful than I could have believed possible. It has tempted me to doubt the Eternal Goodness which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities; and if you had not with your own eyes seen the end, I should have said to you—disbelieve it all. I have not, I think, many more weeks to live, but you are young, and may forget all this.

“JOSEPH HABERDEN, M.D.”

In the course of two or three months I heard Dr. Haberden had died at sea shortly after the ship left England.

THE DEVILS OF PO SUNG

BY BASSETT MORGAN

OF all wealth abounding in Papua for the man who risks its myriad perils and keeps faith with the under-dogs of trade channels by which pearls and Paradise skins flow forth, Captain McTeague preferred pearls. He was a connoisseur and could state at sight and with remarkable accuracy the natal place of a nest of pearls. On the somewhat sketchy charts of tortuous outlines of the evilly lovely black sphinx of the South Seas he had painstakingly marked the location of more prolific sources of those translucent drops of tinted glory, and the finest came from a lagoon on the north coast guarded by an unspoiled, therefore indomitable, tribe under the rule of Tukmoo.

In ports which splash the transient whitewash of civilization on the Papuan sea rims, it was said that Tukmoo's warriors had never met defeat; that as sorcerer, Tukmoo devised ingenious tortures that were the envy of his rivals; that he it was who punished infidelity of women by having them devour facial features of their lovers uncooked and sliced from the living victim, who was staked to the ground, and both were sentenced to the dreadful palm death which takes days of frightful agony, within sight and sound of each other.

Captain McTeague did not doubt the tales told of Tukmoo until he inquired for pearls from old Quong Yick, the Chinese who got them in exchange for alarm clocks, beads,

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printed silks and tin dippers, and the old trader cast the first shadow of suspicion on the hitherto gleaming hellishness of Tukmoo's intrepidity.

"Tukmoo no got. Long time he no got. He ver' sick in his liver for why he no got. He say heap debbil-debbil have got lagoon. He make plenty magic but no can do drive out debbil. Me no savvy. Maybe go look-see."

When he went north to Sarong for gum-dammar, it would not be much out of his course for Captain McTeague to investigate for himself the reason of the dearth of Tukmoo's fine pearls. McTeague headed his schooner toward that red mark on his chart which designated the best pearl lagoon known from the Curlews to the Solomons.

Starting with a sulfur-yellow sky and dead calm from which the wind moaned as it arose and lashed the Banda Sea to fury, a storm drove him from his course and delayed his arrival. With the gray seas still pursuing in hump-backed fury, McTeague saw another craft storm-harried as his own but making remarkable speed in the tail of a typhoon which had kept him on deck for forty-eight hours. She was slender and rakish, black as the hells she came from, with lurid storm-red flashes of light on her pugnacious brass guns. She seemed to be headed for some harbor until McTeague hove in sight, then she veered about as if on patrol. When he drove in closer there was a burst of white smoke, a low "boom" and the scream of a shot ricochetting too close for risking a second aim of her gunner. Captain McTeague promptly turned tail, cursing his own carelessness in not learning more about the debbil-debbils which put fear into the heart of the dauntless and devilish Tukmoo. That grim streak of a craft fast swallowed by coast shadow was manned by oily Mascats, head-hunting Dyaks and God alone knew what mixture of human wolves; but any and all of them.

merely spineless innocents compared with their master, who had made his own name the terror of the Banda.

McTeague knew as much as any other man about Po Sung. He was a Mongolian tainted by the worst of other strains of heritage. He spoke excellent English, was suave in company of Europeans, and had so huge a grasp of trade that he was a valued confidant of port merchants and diplomats for some years while he perfected his own sovereignty in hidden realms of wealth. Po Sung was like a giant octopus with tentacles reaching to every compass point. Now that he was growing old he had brazenly disdained the guise of decency and took his true colors, secure from vengeance in some backwater shelter where he devised and executed his schemes unmolested. Captain McTeague wished he had not run across Po Sung.

He would have headed out and away, only the storm had strained his schooner and snapped off a few spars and he needed to seek shelter and make repairs, especially as the barometer which rose promisingly had suffered a relapse, presaging a flash-back of storm.

At sunset, luridly furious behind the crouching black spine of Papuan hills, he headed the schooner into a lagoon and dropped anchor and was not surprised to be wakened shortly after he turned in by drums of the jungle talking in purring spurts and long tattoo rolls. His arrival was being broadcast by black men in the same manner in which their forebears had communicated news of the epochal upheavals of world inundation, the sunken Lemuria and Atlantis. The night was pregnant with menacing growl of drums, and a grimmer dawn poured opalescent light over a lagoon alert with darting canoes, slender as arrows, heralding the arrival of the sorcerer Tukmoo.

As the sorcerer's canoe shot alongside the schooner, McTeague saw that Tukmoo wore a necklace of pearls large as his finger ends, strung between human incisor teeth. He was plumed and painted, covered from forehead to heel with blue lace of tattooing beaded with cicatrices. A scarlet loin-cloth supported a club knobbed with human knuckle-bones. The forty paddles stabbed the water as one, and McTeague was wondering (since there are but two in a set) how many incisor teeth went into that necklace, when Tukmoo reached the deck and, planting his prehensile-toed feet firmly, demanded, in fairly fluent pidgin-English, strong drink.

McTeague obliged with watered brandy further weakened by grenadine syrup, with a chaser of coffee. He had blundered into a lagoon usurped by Tukmoo when he was driven from his heritage by Po Sung. He regretted the cruise and again wished himself far away.

"O Chief, I must make repairs to my boat," he stated. "How come you no longer guard the pearl lagoon to the south?"

Tukmoo spoke wily words of wisdom. He had the advantage of acquaintance during youth and young manhood with a zealous missionary and at the good man's death from old age had absorbed (according to his belief) wisdom of his heart, which Tukmoo ate roasted. He related a cause for deserting his pearl lagoon which was difficult to translate into pidgin. Captain McTeague shortened the tale for his Swede mate, Okey, when he announced that he would go ashore with Tukmoo.

"Okey, Po Sung has got the pearl lagoon. He's loosed a few extra fine devils and scared the giblets out of Tukmoo. I don't understand the details, but Po Sung has a flock of red devils on the river. They sound like man-eaters, whether bird or beast I can't make out. The muggers speak words.

The apes chin-chin in native lingo. The land is bewitched. I suspected a phonograph, but Tukmoo has one he got from Quong Yick and knows better. His son sailed in to lick hell out of Po Sung and turned up missing just when he was ready to marry a girl all nicely ripened in the bleaching-huts. Tuckmoo is ready to make bigger magic by torturing this girl, only we happened along in time to fall into the mess, and I wish to God that typhoon had piled us on the Curlews before we ran in here. Tukmoo demands that I go and make magic that will drive out Po Sung, since his own monkey-tricks have failed. There's no choice about it, Okey. I've got to go or they'll make potpourri and Irish stew of you and me and the crew. Get me my box of parlor tricks and Bengal lights and pack in a dozen sticks of dynamite with fuses and caps. If you hear me fire two shots twice in succession be ready to grab me and run for deep water. If I don't come back the schooner is yours, Okey."

"You ban damn fool to go," commented Okey. But already Captain McTeague felt the thrill of high adventure beating his blood to foam as the drums in canoes spoke to drums on shore of events going forward.

The stilt-legged huts of a comparatively new village were fresh-thatched and clean. Women stirred cooking-pots over beach fires. Beside Captain McTeague swaggered a black boy, Tao, carrying the box of parlor magic over which he was appointed guard. It was the first time Captain McTeague had been in league with black men or broken his wisdom of neutrality in thirty years of trading. He assumed an arrogance he did not feel as he sat at the feast of roast sea-turtle, scraped coconut cream and stewed fish, washed down with fermented palm-juice. Strolling about the village afterward he saw the bereaved mother of Tukmoo's lost son

Tawa, her body painted in white stripes, her hair matted with filth in token of mourning grief. He also saw old women guarding the bleaching-hut, and caught a glimpse of the bride, who stuck out her head and gazed for a long minute at this white man who came to fight Po Sung's debbil-debbils and avenge her lost lover. She was pretty as a doll, with hair like a curly feather duster, and skin bleached to creamy copper. To McTeague she called a greeting, "Halloo, *Tuan!*"

Tukmoo's rage was sudden. He yelped a command and the girl's shrieks shrilled through the village with the sound of a whip.

"Are you having that child beaten?" he demanded of Tukmoo.

"Not enough to injure her comeliness, because if she is not killed for a debbil feast, I will sell her to a big-bellied Chinese trader," explained Tukmoo.

McTeague knew the folly of interference, yet he hated the sound of the whipping, and played a bold game for a man in the power of savages whose aspect could change from friendliness to yelps of blood-lust in the twinkling of an eye.

"You are wrong to punish the woman just now," he said. "She will prove a help to our magic if she is told she will be taken with us so that her liver, hot with love for your son Tawa, will smell out the place where he is kept prisoner."

Tukmoo was impressed by this reasoning and yelped a rescinding command. The shrieks of the girl changed to quiet sobbing. The whip-wielder leaped from the hut and the girl was flung, sobbing hysterically, to the doorway, where she looked down on McTeague with tear-streaked face and eyes like brimming golden pools. He wondered if her evident adoration of him as her deliverer might be turned to account in getting himself out of a perilous predicament.

Tukmoo commanded a day of feasting. By night the *lagi-lagi* house held sodden harvest of drunken and overstuffed warriors, and Tukmoo slept with his head on the stomach of his oldest wife. McTeague, who dined and drank sparingly, prowled through the deserted village and halted beside the bleaching-hut, where a rift of moonlight splintered by palm sabers twinkled on the face of the girl at the door. Near by drowsed the young Tao, with McTeague's box between his legs.

In a long day of scheming and planning escape by the river McTeague saw his first chance of success. Laying a finger on his lips for silence, he beckoned the girl down the notched log from the hut and touched the sleepy Tao, who started, snatched up the box and stood ready to accompany the white sorcerer.

McTeague pointed to the river and a canoe hauled on shore. It was slipped soundlessly to the water and the three took their places, with the girl in the prow. McTeague understood the awe of his magic box which made them obey unquestioningly. Tukmoo ruled by fear of his cruelties, and the white sorcerer was greater than Tukmoo. In the face of that appraisal of his powers, McTeague did not dare command Tao to head for the lagoon and schooner. He was compelled to make some sort of farce of laying Po Sung's devils, for a cry from Tao would arouse the village and turn the moon-silvered peace to red slaughter. He saw regretfully that Tao headed the canoe inland on the black waterway.

They had not gone a half-mile when in the din of droning, humming, clacking insects came a sound which made the girl gasp with fear and held Tao's paddle dripping as he paused to listen. It was like a voice speaking through a muffled, rasping megaphone. McTeague's skin was prickling as he

distinguished words, disconnected and maudlin, as if a drunken sailor mouthed a booming sea-chantey.

"Blo-ow . . . ma-an do-o-own, o-oh blo-ow tha ma-an do-own." It was repeated and followed by obscene curses.

"Walk-about land, *Tuan!*" whispered the girl who crouched at McTeague's feet.

"A white man in the jungle," he stated with conviction.

"Debbil-debbil!" came a low mutter from Tao.

McTeague watched the river for a canoe. Moon-silver, frail as a spider's spinning, crinkled on the black flow which upheaved. The long head of a crocodile lifted and it seemed to McTeague that from its wicked jaws came a water-smothered repetition of "Blo-ow the man do-own." Then it sank and bubbles broke. The canoe shot forward under frenzied paddling, and in its wake the mugger again lifted his snout and gaping jaws.

"Da-amn Po Su-ung," came a hollow growl, answered by a cackle of raucous laughter from the jungle which made McTeague snatch the revolver at his hip.

"Orang-outang," he said as a tree branch released from the clutch of the mighty "gray man of the woods" crashed. Again came that outcry of terrible mirth and he saw the gray shape, a lighter shadow in the gloom where the moon-light quivered through shaken palms.

"The joke is on you, Red Moorphy," came a deep-chested growl. "Ye hated wather. It took Po Sung to make ye loike ut. Why don't ye find pearls yerself? Pearls! Hell, they got us in this mess. Made a mugger o' you an' a monkey o' me."

Red Murphy! McTeague knew that name. It belonged to a drunken loafer and thief who had served time for killing a Chink trader in pearls. But he could not credit his senses as he heard a jungle voice attribute the personality of a river mugger to Red Murphy.

The canoe leaped like an arrow down the stream, but the gray man of the woods kept pace and the crocodile followed. A patch of shelving shore denuded of vegetation gave off a sickening stench. McTeague was thankful the walk-about ground was temporarily deserted of saurians. At his feet the girl quivered and her teeth chattered. His hair rose in contagion of fear as the moonlight entered a less dense patch of jungle vines where the big ape swung by one foot, peering at the river. Again arose that soul-shattering human laughter ringing through the night.

"Wan more white fool," came the guttural cry. "Go on, you bloody idiot! Po Sung'll take yer brain an' sell yer dried head, an' feed yer carcass to his orchids. Like he did to Red Moorphy an' me. God . . . God . . . like he did to us fer wantin' a few pearls . . ."

A scream from the girl contracted McTeague's nerve skeins. From behind the leathery throat of the saurian moaned a booming. "Meat—whi-ite me-eat. Ea-at. Dr-rink an' be-ee merry."

"Lave 'em alo-one," growled the ape. "I'll have company when Po Sung gits 'em. Don't fill yer leather belly wid white ma-an. Here, have a nut." There was a thud as the hairy gray arm swung and a coconut hit the mugger's jaws, which snapped shut. Then it lunged on shore, the crooked-fanged jaws snapping in vain at the ape which swung just out of reach and shrilled curses as it pelted the armor-clad mugger with coconuts.

McTeague stared. He pinched his own flesh to make sure he was awake. Glancing at Tao he saw sweat pouring down the oiled black chest of the native and the gleam of his eye-whites as he strained every muscle to outdistance the river horror.

Through the overhung river channel resounded the crash

of water beaten by the powerful tail of the crocodile, its booming curses of port dive origin, the thuds of coconuts on its scaly length, the horrid shrieks of the ape's mirth as it denuded palms of their nuts. The river bobbed with them. The roar and scream of the combat was like thunder, silencing the rasp of insect clatter and hard breathing of Tao. McTeague thought he should soon awake from this incredible nightmare. He assured himself it was the ravings of delirium, but the finger-nails of the girl cut his flesh as she clutched his legs in her terror.

"Catchum white-man chin-chin," she quivered. "Make magic, Tuan."

The river turned. The walls of matted lianas shut the sound of combat farther away; then only did Tao slacken speed.

"Debbil-debbils," he groaned. McTeague thought of the feeble frauds of parlor magic in the box shoved toward him by the girl, simple tricks he had brought to fight such magic as he never dreamed—dread, incomprehensible black magic. Had Po Sung trained an ape to speak, a crocodile to talk? He could think of no other explanation, yet that mockery was dissipated when he recalled the words of the ape and its reasoning. This was no parrotlike repetition of words, nor would Po Sung be likely to teach jungle beasts English curses. The terrible Mongolian had invented a new hell into which McTeague plunged, and in that hour his only resolve was to sell life dearly, to die rather than fall into the power of that arch-fiend.

The swish of branches near by roused him. In the waning moonlight of the hour before dawn, he saw a second gray shape swinging along and slowly whimpering inarticulate sounds resembling native lingo. The girl stiffened as she

knelt, her hands clutched her round breasts and her cry aroused McTeague's pity.

"Tawa," she moaned, "Tawa chin-chin . . . talk-talkee."

McTeague felt his hair prickling his scalp. The canoe drifted as Tao was frozen by fear. There was the drip-drip of the paddle held in air.

"Tawa, Tawa," called the girl. The ape ceased muttering, then clutched a mat of lianas and swung closer, peering down at the face of the girl now gray-yellow in the frame of bushy curls. There came a scream that curdled McTeague's blood. The hairy arm shot out and caught the girl's hair, and she was lifted from the canoe to twist slowly and struggle feebly until McTeague's gun cracked. Came a howl of pain as the hold was released, the girl slumped in the canoe and the ape streaked into the jungle. The canoe leaped forward.

McTeague let the girl lie in merciful oblivion. His own blood congealed at the horror of this demon-haunted domain of Po Sung. Behind them came the fighting mugger and first ape, and they dared not attempt to turn back.

Gray dawn sifted over moon and stars. Through densely matted lianas McTeague saw patches of pearl-tinted sky and caught lurid gleams of scarlet flowers which breathed a fetid scent as repulsive as the walk-about grounds of crocodiles. The shore was a mass of orchids, with black throats and quivering stamens of yellow, which climbed the branches of gray trees and dead ropes of vines. A bend in the river hid them from the ape and mugger. The canoe navigated a stretch of stream walled by the furious scarlet of orchids that seemed to announce the master-hand of a gardener planting them like ruddy cliffs along the black flow of river shadow.

When the sun spread gold on the upper reaches of the

flower wall, McTeague observed the orchid petals quivering and folding in elongated bulb-shapes of dull yellow. The river widened into a pool, smooth as a mirror bordered with fern and feathery nipa palm. There was lurid and ominous beauty in the place, menacing and maddening tumult of scarlet orchids of gigantic size, with petals five feet or more in length, their dusky black throats shading to maroon purple. The stamens stood out like knobbed wands thick as a man's thumb. The stench was breath-taking, overpowering, disgusting, yet when he commanded Tao to land he met vigorous protest.

"Catchum die," chattered Tao. He dropped the paddle to scoop water in his palms and suck at it noisily. McTeague snatched the paddle and sent the canoe shoreward. Its prow shoved aside the ferns and he thrust a foot to test the pool rim for a landing foothold, balancing his body with arms outthrust. Instantly the nearest giant flowers lunged forward and he was shocked to helplessness as the great petals wrapped about his bare arm with the cold sensation of serpent scales, yet repulsively flexible and soft.

Paralyzed from amazement he felt himself pulled from the canoe to flounder breast-high in the pool, the petal grip on his arm tenaciously supporting his weight. His arm pained as if constricted by a tourniquet. Tao's screech roused the girl, who first recovered her wits and snatched a knife from Tao's belt. McTeague was trying in vain to tear off the orchid petal. His senses reeled from the anesthetic stench of the orchid throat and he was only vaguely aware that the girl slashed loose gray sections of petals, the veins of which took strength to sever. He slumped into the pool over his head and came up, to clutch at the canoe stern over which he was hauled.

Tearing the petal fragments from his arm he felt the stab

of pain, and blood spurted from the pores of a swelling red band. McTeague was horrified with fear of virulent poison. He jabbed his knife into the flesh and sucked vigorously, spitting into the pool as Tao sent the craft from shore.

As the canoe drifted near shore, McTeague saw the orchids move forward on their stems like gorgeous beast-heads craning toward a glut of meat. The whole wall was alert and in motion, lunging out, waving giant flowers to and fro until he could see the supporting jungle trees dead and bleached to the tops. He knew the vampire orchids of the jungle, but never before had he seen such huge ones, or animal greed so voraciously displayed. Adding to horror, the pool narrowed again to river width, arched overhead by the terrible scarlet flowers. It was like the red throat of a medieval dragon yawning for victims.

McTeague turned from the sight and observed a singular phenomenon at the pool. As the sun rose and its hot light gilded the topmost flowers, their petals jerked reluctantly shut, folded into bulb-shaped buds. At his command the paddle halted. They waited until sunlight flooded the pool and the shore was hung with leathery yellow bulbs. The shaded river yielded more slowly to the all-powerful sun. The canoe went on, and as if sentient, aware of meat near by, the tips of petals unfolded like tigers' tongues. There was the sound of creaking and rubber stems writhing like serpents. The sun had worked one of its myriad miracles, but it did not penetrate into the scarlet funnel more than a hundred yards, where McTeague faced low-hanging scarlet horrors that swayed forward, greedy for prey.

Again the craft was halted and McTeague reached for his box, then busied himself biting caps and fuses on sticks of dynamite. His right arm was swollen to twice its natural

size and almost useless. His lips were hot and dry as in fever. The flower stench was terrific and making them all drowsy.

Yelling to Tao to back the canoe he tossed a stick of dynamite at each river shore, and they were drifting on the pool when a deafening roar crashed. There were tearing and slithering sounds. The river roof seemed to lift and a backwash of water rocked their craft.

For some moments debris rained down, brilliant bunches of feathers that had been Paradise birds and lories, ragged tatters of orchid petals, nooses of lianas, then the scarlet wall seemed to subside and float on the water surface, a bridge of vegetation over which McTeague assisted Tao to shove the canoe into sun-drenched water beyond.

To his incredible relief, McTeague breathed cleaner air than the stinking fetidity of the orchid pool. There was clean salt breeze from the sea and tang of ebb-tide which cleared his brain of the poison that stultified his senses. But they faced peril ahead, for as the river turned he saw the tip-tilted cornices of a dwelling built like an old temple of Cathay and knew they approached the house of Po Sung.

Much as he dreaded a meeting with that terrific personage, there was no choice. He hoped his wits and obvious blundering into the place would prove his innocence of intent to thief pearls. He was too well-known to drop out of sight without enquiry and trouble for any man who held him prisoner. All in all, even Po Sung was a more endurable alternative than a return by the river. Yet his nerves tautened as he saw cultivated gardens, and a long pergola-like bridge spanning the river, completely covered at the far end with the scarlet orchids folded now in yellow buds.

Small channels had been cut from the river, and one of these they followed to a small pool. Red lacquer bridges arched the little streams. The sea-tang was stronger. There

were hedges of fragrant ylang-ylang and frangipani, glimpses of orchards and growing plants in prim array, white crushed-coral paths, coolies in wide hats moving about, stone steps of a landing-place which caught McTeague's breath and gaze.

A tall form in a robe of saffron yellow awaited them, its hands folded in green-banded sleeves. Captain McTeague looked into the grim black eyes of Po Sung.

"Welcome." He spoke in suspiciously bland tones. "I do not often have visitors, Captain McTeague."

His eyes darted like black quicksilver from McTeague's head down to his bleeding arm and to his river-wet trousers and boots.

"I heard your salute. My servants came running to report a breach in my orchid wall. I did not expect you to dynamite a way to my poor house, Captain McTeague. Why not have come by the sea?"

"No doubt you know the reason, Po Sung. Your boat took a pot-shot at my schooner yesterday. I had no idea of visiting you, but when I put in to make repairs, Tukmoo decided to detain me. I've had a bad night trying to get away and got a caress from your loving orchids. Could I trouble you for some permanganate?"

"My poor house is at your disposal, Captain McTeague."

He followed Po Sung up the path, with the girl close at his heels. Tao was sent to white-washed huts of coolie workers. On the porch of the house, copper-screened and shaded, McTeague fell into a sea-grass chair and snatched at the tall glass of cool liquid brought by a Dyak servant. He was exhausted and his eyes closed.

When he wakened he was lying on a soft mattress, clad in silk pajamas, and his wounded arm was wrapped with

gauze. Light from a horn-sided ceiling lantern showed him a sleeping-room with no other furnishings than his bed and a blue jar of scentless hibiscus along one wall. He was troubled by far-away moanings and yowls from the jungle, as if the great gray men of the woods howled their hate of Po Sung.

Then again he slept and awoke greatly refreshed. The Dyak boy brought a tray of food, highly spiced chicken curry, fruit and rice wine. Evidently Po Sung lived in luxury in his hidden haven. McTeague decided that the tales told of the Mongolian were too luridly flavored by superstition. A devil he might be, but he had extended gentlemanly hospitality to Captain McTeague.

The Dyak boy shaved McTeague and trimmed his bronze beard. He was shown a coral-lined swimming-pool where he bathed and donned pajamas of heavier silk and thick-soled sandals, returning to the porch where Po Sung sat waving a womanish fan of carved ivory and kingfisher feathers.

"You slept well, Captain McTeague?" he enquired.

"Splendidly, thanks to you, Po Sung."

"I am honored. I feared your rest would be disturbed. The big apes were noisy and my servants worked with torches in the garden. However, I am free to-day to entertain you. No doubt you came for pearls."

He clapped his hands, and the Dyak boy appeared with a lacquer box and placed it on McTeague's lap, then opened the lid. McTeague gazed on such magnificence of pearls as he had never seen, ran his fingers in their glory, poured them from palm to palm, then realizing that his eyes too much reflected the greed he felt of such wealth he resolutely snapped down the lid and motioned the boy to take them away.

"The sight of them makes me want them, of course. But

I only *trade* in pearls, and so far only through Quong Yick, who told me that Tukmoo no longer held this lagoon. I came to learn why he let it go, and I fell into his clutches. He took me prisoner and demanded powerful magic to fight your debbil-debbils. I brought my parlor tricks and dynamite. What else could I do? Tukmoo had me where he could force me to do his bidding. Then he had a big feast, and while he was drunk and asleep I came away with Tao the black boy and the girl who was to have been the wife of Tawa, son of Tukmoo. We were pretty badly scared at the apes and muggers on the way here and drifted into the orchid lagoon. I blasted my way through."

Po Sung caressed the silky black mustache which dripped like tarstreams from his upper lip.

"Tukmoo's son is braver than the sorcerer. I admire such courage in youth and have made him independent of the blacks, who are stupid pigs. But it is a pity to separate two lovers, so I was pleased when you brought the girl. They shall be united."

"That's mighty decent of you, Po Sung," said McTeague impulsively. Then, as he saw the basilisk gaze of those black eyes and the sneering smile of the cruel lips, his heart missed a beat. "You mean what you have just said?" he faltered.

"I speak the truth, Captain McTeague. In a few days you shall see for yourself. Meanwhile I should like to show you some of the magic I have worked here, and the growth of an orchid bulb planted only last night. Come!"

McTeague followed him toward the pergola arching the river. It was still in shadow and the scarlet orchids wide open at the jungle end. At the near approach, thick green stems thrust rosy tips from soft, loose earth. Po Sung's yellow hand pointed, and McTeague saw the stems stretch higher,

growing inches as he watched, putting forth buds, and twisting through the bars of the trellis.

"Marvelous, Po Sung. You are another Burbank."

"Again I am honored by your praise. The wild orchid devoured only insects and birds, but under my gardening it is perfected to a man-eating flower fed by blood. It is a hungry thing, Captain McTeague, and only for the foolish assaults of Tukmoo's warriors, the river walls would not have flourished as they do. I planted those bulbs in human carcasses, as this one was planted last night."

McTeague's body jerked. His head came up slowly until he gazed into the terrible eyes of Po Sung.

"You planted a bulb in a human body last night?"

Po Sung nodded.

"Did I not say that I have decided to unite Tawa and his bride? Tawa is now in the jungle. I heard him chattering to you as you came up the river. I hope your shot did not maim him. Tawa's body feeds this full-grown orchid across the bridge. His brain is in the head of a gray man of the woods."

"God in heaven!" breathed McTeague. "You mock me with lies."

Po Sung smiled. His black eyebrows arched.

"You shall see and believe. You are not the first to doubt the power of Po Sung. One year ago two thieves stole in from the sea. One of them supplied brains to a river crocodile, the other is a gray ape. They were companions in crime, but always fighting. They still fight along the river shore, a most amusing sight, as you must have found it last night."

McTeague felt the tropic heat choking him, yet cold sweat rained down his face. He stumbled over the coral paths as he followed Po Sung to the house and through doorways he scarcely saw, with the smell of chloroform growing stronger,

until he stood in a room with white cement walls, a skylight overhead, fitted like a hospital operating-room. Under the open skylight was a huge iron-legged cot, to which the body of a she-ape was strapped, its head swathed in bandages. Two Chinese were clearing away the evidences of surgery, and one of them spoke to Po Sung in accentless English:

“She is doing splendidly.”

“The bride of Tawa,” announced Po Sung, pointing to the ape. “My assistant, Dr. Feng Chu.”

McTeague heard no more. The floor seemed to heave and bludgeon him. He had fainted.

For time of which he had no means of keeping track, McTeague lay on a porch couch, waited on hand and foot by the Dyak boy. Po Sung and Dr. Feng Chu, he learned from the assistant surgeon, were away on the yacht. Po Sung left orders to show Captain McTeague every respect and tell him the casket of pearls was a gift. It was advisable not to attempt to return to his schooner until Po Sung's arrival. The gray apes were troublesome lately.

They troubled McTeague. At night he heard the raucous mirth and mournful calling of Tawa, and saw the ghoulish man-shapes in the starlight. The she-ape in the surgery was also noisy, moaning piteously, and mouthing queer sounds quite different from ape-chatter.

It seemed to McTeague he was still in feverish delirium. He did not want to escape, had no power to attempt it. There were books, but he would not exert himself to read. Wandering about the grounds, he noticed the new orchid had attained a prodigious size and was already beginning to bloom. Mingled with his waking dreams were thoughts of

two vampire orchids rooted in the moldering flesh of Tawa and the girl, and their brains in the heads of jungle simians.

There came a day when the assistant surgeon led the she-ape to the grounds and chained her to a tree, where she squatted as inert as McTeague on the porch. He wondered at her limpness until the Chinese told him she was under opiates to keep her quiet while her head healed. Then it flashed to the mind of McTeague that, like the ape, he was being doped. No other explanation accounted for his spineless indifference to his fate. A healthy fear intruded on his half dreams. He was being held for some sinister purpose of Po Sung, and like a fool he had supinely endured.

"Where is Po Sung?" he asked the Chinese.

"You have heard of a remarkable trained ape belonging to a scientist in Java, perhaps? Po Sung hopes to bring it back and turn it into this jungle as a companion for Tawa and the other experiment on the pearl thief, McMahan."

"I have seen pet monkeys freed among their own kind," said McTeague slowly. "The wild monkeys kill them instantly."

The Chinese did not answer, for the she-ape had roused and was leaping to the length of her chains. The tree shook with her vigorous attempts to free herself.

"Now she shall have her lesson to avoid the house when she is at liberty," said the Chinese. He went into the house and appeared again with a whip of long thin lashes barbed with metal. Watching his chance, he swung it at the she-ape. McTeague hated the cruelty of that performance, the furious suffering beast with her blood-red eyes, the streaks of blood spurting from her flanks and the coldblooded Chinese lashing with all his strength. His own blood boiled, raced, lashed him to fury that combated the dope he was now certain had been fed him in the spicy curries at mealtimes.

When the ape sank down quivering and exhausted, the coolies rushed forward and unshackled her, and again the lash sang through the air and lifted tufts of skin. With a bound she was up and staggering uncertainly away, to disappear over the bridge into the jungle. The Chinese coiled his whip and returned to the house.

That day McTeague scraped his food into a towel and hid it under his mattress, then wandered to the gardens and ate fruit. Already he felt lighter, freer, but his nerves ached for the sedative. He realized a new peril, a craving for opium fed him, that would be worse than slavery unless he escaped at once. But he did not know how closely his movements were guarded.

He returned to the porch. The assistant surgeon was talking to a coolie, whom he dismissed. He asked McTeague to come with him to the surgery, where he filled a hypodermic needle, then laid yellow fingers on the white man's arm.

"No you don't," exploded McTeague. "You've doped me long enough. Po Sung won't use my carcass for his devil-orchids unless he kills my brain first." His fist shot out, caught the point of the yellow jaw, and with a screech the Chinese doubled up on the floor. McTeague heard running feet and slammed shut the metal door of the surgery just as yellow men lunged into view. The bolt rang home. He had barricaded himself in the cement-walled room with the unconscious yellow man.

For a few moments he felt a huge satisfaction, but it passed as the Chinese stirred. He hauled him to the cot and strapped him with bonds that had held the she-ape. Then he mopped his sweaty face and considered. From the open skylight he heard sounds of some alarm. The yellow men had thundered on the door, then departed. Using a small

ladder, he climbed to the roof opening and looked from the tiers of roofs down on the domain of Po Sung, the sunset colors on the gleaming lagoon and sea, and he saw there the rakish black yacht whose guns had fired on his schooner. Po Sung had returned.

News of his return agitated the servants, who darted to and fro with flaring torches. Then McTeague saw the cause of their excitement. On the orchid-twined bridge two gray shapes swung, and the closed flower bulbs bobbed like elongated balloons on the strings. The river water was stirred by a lashing black tail, and in the rapidly gathering night gloom sounded the booming curses of devils which Po Sung had created, roused now to fury against the arch-fiend.

A fierce, unholy joy filled the breast of Captain McTeague. Below him the yellow surgeon heaved against the binding thongs of the cot. A dancing light low down on the lagoon told of Po Sung's small boat leaving the yacht. He would enter the waterway and meet the rage of his victims, and from his high perch McTeague could defy them all, Po Sung, the mugger and the apes.

No, not all, for a third wavering gray ape came over the bridge, fangs bared in a horrid grin, frightening the torch-bearers back to the house as she advanced. In the smoky light McTeague could see the raw-edged scar about her head which bandages had hidden that day. Her screams were piercing and pitiful, her scrambling weak and uncertain, but she was fearless, for behind her stalked the man-apes, tremendously powerful, long arms swinging to their feet, and before that terrible sight the coolies retreated with wild screeches, slamming doors, moving furniture against all openings.

Up the river bank crawled a glistening black length of scaled ugliness, with jaws snapping.

McTeague heard the sound of ripping and tearing, the furious scream of the simians, then blood-curdling cries. He saw a glare below where the she-ape tossed torches in a heap to blaze and burn, lighting the scene of carnage. He saw human forms, broken and twisted, hurled from the porch, and strips of bamboo walls tossed on the fire. Then he knew his own peril. Sooner or later the apes would slaughter every living thing, tear the house to shreds and break into this surgery. He looked down at the bound yellow man on the cot. This was no time for petty differences.

"The jungle apes are killing the servants," he cried, "and burning the house. We are trapped up here, and Po Sung is on his way by the river to meet a doom he deserves. I'll confess I'm a coward right at this minute. I prefer a shot to that death. Is there a gun within reach?"

He dropped down and unfastened the bonds, then pointed to the ladder, which the Chinese mounted, even climbing out on the roof to look over its edge.

McTeague heard him cry out, a despairing shriek of terror. He leaped up the ladder in time to see a gray shape squatted on the roof dangling the miserable surgeon by one arm and swinging him back and forth. Suddenly her hold broke. The Chinese twisted in the air and fell to the ground, quivered, and then lay still.

McTeague looked into the gleaming red eyes of the she-ape. He had no weapon, but below were cases of surgical knives, his only defense now, his only chance of suicide to escape worse. He dropped from the skylight and his fist crashed into the glass of a case, his fingers fumbled in the darkness among queer contrivances, but none of them knives. He dashed to another case, guided by the faint luminosity of glass, and crashed through it. Then the faint starlight and fire reflection were blotted out. The skylight held the

she-ape, and she had dropped inside and sat on the ladder peering at him. He could see her gleaming eyes, hear his own breath sobbing in his throat as his hands fumbled for knives and found only small probes, useless to fight that huge gray death.

He was flattened against the wall beside the case, a fistful of sharp probes ready for the lunge, when he heard her muttering in piteous efforts to control the vocal mechanism of the thick throat.

"*Tuan*," she muttered, "*Tuan*"; and swung down from the ladder with an arm outstretched. He felt the claws touch his arm gently, and stroke his flesh.

Then for McTeague blackness fell. He was vaguely aware of being swung in giant arms and feeling a cool wind in his face. His eyes opened. He lay on the upper roof, with the arm of the she-ape holding him firmly. Below, the fire leaped and the sounds of savage destruction went on, but there were no cries of fear now, only the guttural curses of the ape McMahan and war-cries of Papuan jungle uttered by Tawa. Turning his head, McTeague saw the light on the yacht's dingey coming down the river.

"Look," he muttered, and his arm pointed. The she-ape turned.

She saw and understood. In another moment McTeague was seized bodily and swung in air as the she-ape swiftly descended by the tiers of pointed roofs until he was dropped unhurt on the earth. Seizing him by one wrist she ran with him toward the river, where black gloom of trees hid them effectively. There McTeague, still held by his captor, saw the dark swirl of water where the mugger dived. He saw the boat sweep on under the dip of oars, to its doom.

There was an upheaved bow lantern, cries in the night,

and the lashing of the mugger's tail, the snapping of its terrible jaws and sea-oaths from its dread throat. Later, a limp, dripping figure crawled to the bank. McTeague could hear its gasping breathing, and the she-ape leaped forward. He was free.

He waited until the she-ape seized that creeping victim escaped from the mugger, and her cry summoned the man-apes, one of whom carried a brand of flaming wood. Its light shone on the yellow face of Po Sung, distorted now by terror he had so often chiseled on faces of other men. McTeague saw the she-ape clutch the long ends of his mustache, curl them about her claws and drag Po Sung by his mouth toward the pergola.

Then he turned away at the dreadful cry that broke. The three apes were tearing Po Sung to bits and stuffing them into the orchids.

On the river the dingey floated. McTeague darted toward it, plunged in, dragged it to the shallows and secured a floating oar. He glanced back at the river bend and saw the apes flinging bits to the gaping jaws of the mugger. Then he sculled for life toward the lagoon.

A cry from Po Sung's yacht hailed him, but he paid no heed. One man could not catch McTeague on that night of fear and the others of the crew were staining the black river water with their life-blood. A gleaming stretch of lagoon entrance beckoned to the sea, which was quiet, star-silvered. It was the time of ebb-tide, an evil hour in Papua, but Captain McTeague was beyond feeling, beyond thinking, horror-drugged, fear-driven, possessing the strength of a maniac as he sculled the boat north.

He did not remember coming to the lagoon where his schooner lay, but the mate told him later that they saw him

standing in the boat, swaying from side to side like a drunken man, and through the glass they recognized Captain McTeague.

There was a tremendous feast the day after his return. Tukmoo and his warriors wakened the jungle echoes by their drums. Captain McTeague lay oblivious, and Okey the mate did the honors of the occasion, standing guard over the deck cot where McTeague lay prone, exhausted, weary to death and fighting nightmares.

"You ban wan great man, Captain," Okey explained later. "Tukmoo ban brang pearls off Po Sung. Debbil-debbils ban gone now. How come?"

Tukmoo had raked over the wreckage of Po Sung's house and found the casket of fine pearls. It seemed a trifling reward for laying the debbil-debbils of Po Sung, but Captain McTeague only shuddered and closed his eyes.

"Haul up the mud-hooks and crowd on canvas," he said to Okey. "When Red Murphy and McMahan and Tawa and the she-ape get a grouch on, there'll be hell popping in that jungle. I've seen it for the last time. Not for a ship's hold of pearls will I put in at any lagoon on the Banda shore. They nearly made a monkey of me, Okey. Honored me by fetching a trained orang-outang from Java to hold my witless brains. Maybe they had my measure at that. I was fool enough to go in and idiot enough to escape. A wise man would never have come out alive."

THE ISLE OF VOICES

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

KEOLA was married with Lehua, daughter of Kalamake, the wise man of Molokai, and he kept his dwelling with the father of his wife. There was no man more cunning than that prophet; he read the stars, he could divine by the bodies of the dead, and by the means of evil creatures: he could go alone into the highest parts of the mountain, into the region of the hobgoblins, and there he would lay snares to entrap the spirits of ancient.

For this reason no man was more consulted in all the Kingdom of Hawaii. Prudent people bought, and sold, and married, and laid out their lives by his counsels; and the King had him twice to Kona to seek the treasures of Kamehameha. Neither was any man more feared: of his enemies, some had dwindled in sickness by the virtue of his incantations, and some had been spirited away, the life and the clay both, so that folk looked in vain for so much as a bone of their bodies. It was rumored that he had the art or the gift of the old heroes. Men had seen him at night upon the mountains, stepping from one cliff to the next; they had seen him walking in the high forest, and his head and shoulders were above the trees.

This Kalamake was a strange man to see. He was come of the best blood in Molokai and Maui, of a pure descent; and yet he was more white to look upon than any foreigner;

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his hair the color of dry grass, and his eyes red and very blind, so that "Blind as Kalamake that can see across to-morrow," was a by-word in the islands.

Of all these doings of his father-in-law, Keola knew a little by the common repute, a little more he suspected, and the rest he ignored. But there was one thing troubled him. Kalamake was a man that spared for nothing, whether to eat or to drink or to wear; and for all he paid in bright new dollars. "Bright as Kalamake's dollars," was another saying in the Eight Isles. Yet he neither sold, nor planted, nor took hire—only now and then from his sorceries—and there was no source conceivable for so much silver coin.

It chanced one day Keola's wife was gone upon a visit to Kaunakakai on the lee side of the island, and the men were forth at the sea-fishing. But Keola was an idle dog, and he lay in the veranda and watched the surf beat on the shore and the birds fly about the cliff. It was a chief thought with him always—the thought of the bright dollars. When he lay down to bed he would be wondering why they were so many, and when he woke at morn he would be wondering why they were all new; and the thing was never absent from his mind. But this day of all days he made sure in his heart of some discovery. For it seems he had observed the place where Kalamake kept his treasure, which was a lock-fast desk against the parlor wall, under the print of Kamehameha the fifth, and a photograph of Queen Victoria with her crown; and it seems again that, no later than the night before, he found occasion to look in, and behold! the bag lay there empty. And this was the day of the steamer; he could see her smoke off Kalaupapa; and she must soon arrive with a month's goods, tinned salmon and gin, and all manner of rare luxuries for Kalamake.

"Now if he can pay for his goods to-day," Keola thought,

"I shall know for certain that the man is a warlock, and the dollars come out of the Devil's pocket."

While he was so thinking, there was his father-in-law behind him, looking vexed.

"Is that the steamer?" he asked.

"Yes," said Keola. "She has but to call at Pelekunu, and then she will be here."

"There is no help for it then," returned Kalamake, "and I must take you into my confidence, Keola, for the lack of any one better. Come here within the house."

So they stepped together into the parlor, which was a very fine room, papered and hung with prints, and furnished with a rocking-chair, and a table and a sofa in the European style. There was a shelf of books besides, and a family Bible in the midst of the table, and the lock-fast writing-desk against the wall; so that any one could see it was the house of a man of substance.

Kalamake made Keola close the shutters of the windows, while he himself locked all the doors and set open the lid of the desk. From this he brought forth a pair of necklaces hung with charms and shells, a bundle of dried herbs, and the dried leaves of trees, and a green branch of palm.

"What I am about," said he, "is a thing beyond wonder. The men of old were wise; they wrought marvels, and this among the rest; but that was at night in the dark, under the fit stars and in the desert. The same will I do here in my own house, and under the plain eye of day." So saying, he put the Bible under the cushion of the sofa so that it was all covered, brought out from the same place a mat of a wonderfully fine texture, and heaped the herbs and leaves on sand in a tin pan. And then he and Keola put on the necklaces, and took their stand upon the opposite corners of the mat.

“The time comes,” said the warlock; “be not afraid.”

With that he set flame to the herbs, and began to mutter and wave the branch of palm. At first the light was dim because of the closed shutters; but the herbs caught strongly afire, and the flames beat upon Keola, and the room glowed with the burning; and next the smoke rose and made his head swim and his eyes darken, and the sound of Kalamake muttering ran in his ears. And suddenly, to the mat on which they were standing came a snatch or twitch, that seemed to be more swift than lightning. In the same wink the room was gone, and the house, the breath all beaten from Keola’s body. Volumes of sun rolled upon his eyes and head, and he found himself transported to a beach of the sea, under a strong sun, with a great surf roaring: he and the warlock standing there on the same mat, speechless, gasping and grasping at one another, and passing their hands before their eyes.

“What was this?” cried Keola, who came to himself the first, because he was the younger. “The pang of it was like death.”

“It matters not,” panted Kalamake. “It is now done.”

“And, in the name of God, where are we?” cried Keola.

“That is not the question,” replied the sorcerer. “Being here, we have matter in our hands, and that we must attend to. Go, while I recover my breath, into the borders of the wood, and bring me the leaves of such and such an herb, and such and such a tree, which you will find to grow there plentifully—three handfuls of each and be speedy. We must be home again before the steamer comes; it would seem strange if we had disappeared.” And he sat on the sand and panted.

Keola went up the beach, which was of shining sand and coral, strewn with singular shells; and he thought in his heart;

“How do I know this beach? I will come here again and gather shells.”

In front of him was a line of palms against the sky; not like the palms of the Eight Islands, but tall and fresh and beautiful, and hanging out withered fans like gold among the green, and he thought in his heart:

“It is strange I should not have found this grove. I will come here again, when it is warm, to sleep.” And he thought, “How warm it has grown suddenly!” For it was winter in Hawaii, and the day had been chill. And he thought also, “Where are the gray mountains? And where is the high cliff with the hanging forest and the wheeling birds?” And the more he considered, the less he might conceive in what quarter of the islands he was fallen.

In the border of the grove, where it met the beach, the herb was growing, but the tree further back. Now, as Keola went toward the tree, he was aware of a young woman who had nothing on her body but a belt of leaves.

“Well!” thought Keola, “they are not very particular about their dress in this part of the country.” And he paused, supposing she would observe him and escape; and seeing that she still looked before her, stood and hummed aloud. Up she leaped at the sound. Her face was ashen; she looked this way and that, and her mouth gaped with the terror of her soul. But it was a strange thing that her eyes did not rest upon Keola.

“Good-day,” said he. “You need not be so frightened, I will not eat you.” And he had scarce opened his mouth before the young woman fled into the bush.

“These are strange manners,” thought Keola, and, not thinking what he did, ran after her.

As he ran, the girl kept crying in some speech that was not practised in Hawaii, yet some of the words were the same,

and he knew she kept calling and warning others. And presently he saw more people running—men, women, and children, one with another, all running and crying like people at a fire. And with that he began to grow afraid himself, and returned to Kalamake bringing the leaves. Him he told what he had seen.

“You must pay no heed,” said Kalamake. “All this is like a dream and shadows. All will disappear and be forgotten.”

“It seemed none saw me,” said Keola.

“And none did,” replied the sorcerer. “We walk here in the broad sun invisible by reason of these charms. Yet they hear us; and therefore it is well to speak softly, as I do.”

With that he made a circle round the mat with stones, and in the midst he set the leaves.

“It will be your part,” said he, “to keep the leaves alight, and feed the fire slowly. While they blaze (which is but for a little moment) I must do my errand; and before the ashes blacken, the same power that brought us carries us away. Be ready now with the match; and do you call me in good time lest the flames burn out and I be left.”

As soon as the leaves caught, the sorcerer leaped like a deer out of the circle, and began to race along the beach like a hound that has been bathing. As he ran, he kept stooping to snatch shells; and it seemed to Keola that they glittered as he took them. The leaves blazed with a clear flame that consumed them swiftly; and presently Keola had but a handful left, and the sorcerer was far off, running and stopping.

“Back!” cried Keola. “Back! The leaves are near done.”

At that Kalamake turned, and if he had run before, now he flew. But fast as he ran, the leaves burned faster. The flame was ready to expire when, with a great leap, he bounded on the mat. The wind of his leaping blew it out; and with that the beach was gone, and the sun and the sea; and

they stood once more in the dimness of the shuttered parlor, and were once more shaken and blinded; and on the mat betwixt them lay a pile of shining dollars. Keola ran to the shutters; and there was the steamer tossing in the swell close in.

The same night Kalamake took his son-in-law apart, and gave him five dollars in his hand.

“Keola,” said he, “if you are a wise man (which I am doubtful of) you will think you slept this afternoon on the veranda, and dreamed as you were sleeping. I am a man of few words, and I have for my helpers people of short memories.”

Never a word more said Kalamake, nor referred again to that affair. But it ran all the while in Keola’s head—if he were lazy before, he would now do nothing.

“Why should I work,” thought he, “when I have a father-in-law who makes dollars of seashells?”

Presently his share was spent. He spent it all upon fine clothes. And then he was sorry:

“For,” thought he, “I had done better to have bought a concertina, with which I might have entertained myself all day long.” And then he began to grow vexed with Kalamake.

“This man has the soul of a dog,” thought he. “He can gather dollars when he pleases on the beach, and he leaves me to pine for a concertina! Let him beware; I am no child, I am as cunning as he, and hold his secret.” With that he spoke to his wife Lehua, and complained of her father’s manners.

“I would let my father be,” said Lehua. “He is a dangerous man to cross.”

“I care that for him!” cried Keola; and snapped his fin-

gers. "I have him by the nose. I can make him do what I please." And he told Lehua the story.

But she shook her head.

"You may do what you like," said she; "but as sure as you thwart my father, you will be no more heard of. Think of this person, and that person; think of Hua, who was a noble of the House of Representatives, and went to Honolulu every year; and not a bone or a hair of him was found. Remember Kamau, and how he wasted to a thread, so that his wife lifted him with one hand. Keola, you are a baby in my father's hands; he will take you with his thumb and finger and eat you like a shrimp."

Now Keola was truly afraid of Kalamake, but he was vain too, and these words of his wife's incensed him.

"Very well," said he, "if that is what you think of me, I will show how much you are deceived." And he went straight to where his father-in-law was sitting in the parlor.

"Kalamake," said he, "I want a concertina."

"Do you, indeed?" said Kalamake.

"Yes," said he, "and I may as well tell you plainly, I mean to have it. A man who picks up dollars on the beach can certainly afford a concertina."

"I had no idea you had so much spirit," replied the sorcerer. "I thought you were a timid, useless lad, and I cannot describe how much pleased I am to find I was mistaken. Now I begin to think I may have found an assistant and successor in my difficult business. A concertina? You shall have the best in Honolulu. And to-night, as soon as it is dark, you and I will go and find the money."

"Shall we return to the beach?" asked Keola.

"No, no!" replied Kalamake; "you must begin to learn more of my secrets. Last time I taught you to pick shells;

this time I shall teach you to catch fish. Are you strong enough to launch Pili's boat?"

"I think I am," returned Keola. "But why should we not take your own, which is afloat already?"

"I have a reason which you will understand thoroughly before to-morrow," said Kalamake. "Pili's boat is the better suited for my purpose. So, if you please, let us meet there as soon as it is dark; and in the meanwhile, let us keep our own counsel, for there is no cause to let the family into our business."

Honey is not more sweet than was the voice of Kalamake, and Keola could scarce contain his satisfaction.

"I might have had my concertina weeks ago," thought he, "and there is nothing needed in this world but a little courage."

Presently after he spied Lehua weeping, and was half in a mind to tell her all was well.

"But no," thinks he; "I shall wait till I can show her the concertina; we shall see what the chit will do then. Perhaps she will understand in the future that her husband is a man of some intelligence."

As soon as it was dark father- and son-in-law launched Pili's boat and set the sail. There was a great sea, and it blew strong from the leeward; but the boat was swift and light and dry, and skimmed the waves. The wizard had a lantern, which he lit and held with his finger through the ring; and the two sat in the stern and smoked cigars, of which Kalamake had always a provision, and spoke like friends of magic and the great sums of money which they could make by its exercise, and what they should buy first, and what second; and Kalamake talked like a father.

Presently he looked all about, and above him at the stars,

and back at the island, which was already three parts sunk under the sea, and he seemed to consider ripely his position.

“Look!” says he, “there is Molokai already far behind us, and Maui like a cloud; and by the bearing of these three stars I know I am come where I desire. This part of the sea is called the Sea of the Dead. It is in this place extraordinarily deep, and the floor is all covered with the bones of men, and in the holes of this part gods and goblins keep their habitation. The flow of the sea is to the north, stronger than a shark can swim, and any man who shall here be thrown out of a ship it bears away like a wild horse into the uttermost ocean. Presently he is spent and goes down, and his bones are scattered with the rest, and gods devour his spirit.”

Fear came on Keola at the words, and he looked, and by the light of the stars and the lantern, the warlock seemed to change.

“What ails you?” cried Keola, quick and sharp.

“It is not I who am ailing,” said the wizard; “but there is one here very sick.”

With that he changed his grasp upon the lantern, and, behold! as he drew his finger from the ring, the finger stuck and the ring was burst, and his hand was grown to be of the bigness of three.

At that sight Keola screamed and covered his face.

But Kalamake held up the lantern. “Look rather at my face!” said he—and his head was huge as a barrel; and still he grew and grew as a cloud grows on a mountain, and Keola sat before him screaming, and the boat raced on the great seas.

“And now,” said the wizard, “what do you think about that concertina? and are you sure you would not rather have a flute? No?” says he; “that is well, for I do not like my family to be changeable of purpose. But I begin to think

I had better get out of this paltry boat, for my bulk swells to a very unusual degree, and if we are not the more careful, she will presently be swamped."

With that he threw his legs over the side. Even as he did so, the greatness of the man grew thirty-fold and forty-fold as swift as sight or thinking, so that he stood in the deep seas to the armpits, and his head and shoulders rose like a high isle, and the swell beat and burst upon his bosom, as it beats and breaks against a cliff. The boat ran still to the north but he reached out his hand, and took the gunwale by the finger and thumb, and broke the side like a biscuit, and Keola was spilled into the sea. And the pieces of the boat the sorcerer crushed in the hollow of his hand and flung miles away into the night.

"Excuse my taking the lantern," said he; "for I have a long wade before me, and the land is far, and the bottom of the sea uneven, and I feel the bones under my toes."

And he turned and went off walking with great strides; and as often as Keola sank in the trough he could see him no longer; but as often as he was heaved upon the crest, there he was striding and dwindling, and he held the lamp high over his head, and the waves broke white about him as he went.

Since first the islands were fished out of the sea, there was never a man so terrified as this Keola. He swam indeed, but he swam as puppies swim when they are cast in to drown, and knew not wherefore. He could but think of the hugeness of the swelling of the warlock, of that face which was great as a mountain, of those shoulders that were broad as an isle, and of the seas that beat on them in vain. He thought, too, of the concertina, and shame took hold upon him; and of the dead men's bones, and fear shook him.

Of a sudden he was aware of something dark against the

stars that tossed, and a light below, and a brightness of the cloven sea; and he heard speech of men. He cried out aloud and a voice answered; and in a twinkling the bows of a ship hung above him on a wave like a thing balanced, and swooped down. He caught with his two hands in the chains of her, and the next moment was buried in the rushing seas, and the next hauled on board by seamen.

They gave him gin and biscuit and dry clothes, and asked him how he came where they found him, and whether the light which they had seen was the lighthouse, Lae o Ka Laau. But Keola knew white men are like children and only believe their own stories; so about himself he told them what he pleased, and as for the light (which was Kalamake's lantern) he vowed he had seen none.

This ship was a schooner bound for Honolulu, and then to trade in the low islands; and by a very good chance for Keola she had lost a man off the bowsprit in a squall. It was no use talking. Keola durst not stay in the Eight Islands. Word goes so quickly, and all men are so fond to talk and carry news, that if he hid in the north end of Kauai or in the south end of Kau, the wizard would have wind of it before a month, and he must perish. So he did what seemed the most prudent, and shipped sailor in the place of the man who had been drowned.

In some ways the ship was a good place. The food was extraordinarily rich and plenty, with biscuits and salt beef every day, and pea-soup and puddings made of flour and suet twice a week, so that Keola grew fat. The captain also was a good man, and the crew no worse than other whites. The trouble was the mate, who was the most difficult man to please Keola had ever met with, and beat and cursed him daily, both for what he did and what he did not. The blows that he dealt were very sure, for he was strong; and the

words he used were very unpalatable, for Keola was come of a good family and accustomed to respect. And what was the worst of all, whenever Keola found a chance to sleep, there was the mate awake and stirring him up with a rope's end. Keola saw it would never do; and he made up his mind to run away.

They were about a month out from Honolulu when they made the land. It was a fine starry night, the sea was smooth as well as the sky fair; it blew a steady Trade; and there was the island on their weather bow, a ribbon of palm-trees lying flat along the sea. The captain and the mate looked at it with the night glass, and named the name of it, and talked of it, beside the wheel where Keola was steering. It seemed it was an isle where no traders came. By the captain's way, it was an isle besides where no man dwelt; but the mate thought otherwise.

"I don't give a cent for the directory," said he. "I've been past here one night in the schooner *Eugénie*: it was just such a night as this; they were fishing with torches, and the beach was thick with lights like a town."

"Well, well," says the captain, "it's steep-to, that's the great point; and there ain't any outlying dangers by the chart, so we'll just hug the lee side of it. Keep her ramping full, don't I tell you!" he cried to Keola, who was listening so hard that he forgot to steer.

And the mate cursed him, and swore that Kanaka was for no use in the world, and if he got started after him with a belaying-pin, it would be a cold day for Keola.

And so the captain and mate lay down on the house together, and Keola was left to himself.

"This island will do very well for me," he thought; "if no traders deal there, the mate will never come. And as for Kalamake, it is not possible he can ever get as far as this."

With that he kept edging the schooner nearer in. He had to do this quietly, for it was the trouble with these white men, and above all with the mate, that you could never be sure of them; they would all be sleeping sound, or else pretending, and if a sail shook, they would jump to their feet and fall on you with a rope's end. So Keola edged her up little by little, and kept all drawing. And presently the land was close on board, and the sound of the sea on the sides of it grew loud.

With that, the mate sat up suddenly upon the house.

"What are you doing?" he roars. "You'll have the ship ashore!"

And he made one bound for Keola, and Keola made another clean over the rail and plump into the starry sea. When he came up again, the schooner had payed off on her true course, and the mate stood by the wheel himself, and Keola heard him cursing. The sea was smooth under the lee of the island; it was warm besides, and Keola had his sailor's knife, so he had no fear of sharks. A little way before him the trees stopped; there was a break in the line of the land like the mouth of a harbor; and the tide, which was then flowing, took him up and carried him through. One minute he was without, and the next within, and floated there in a wide shallow water, bright with ten thousand stars and all about him was the ring of the land, with its string of palm-trees. And he was amazed, because this was a kind of island he had never heard of.

The time of Keola in that place was in two periods—the period when he was alone, and the period when he was there with the tribe. At first he sought everywhere and found no man; only some houses standing in a hamlet, and the marks of fires. But the ashes of the fires were cold and the rains had washed them away; and the winds had blown, and some of

the huts were overthrown. It was here he took his dwelling; and he made a fire drill, and a shell hook, and fished and cooked his fish, and climbed after green cocoa-nuts, the juice of which he drank, for in all the isle there was no water. The days were long to him, and the nights terrifying. He made a lamp of cocoa-shell, and drew the oil of the ripe nuts, and made a wick of fiber; and when evening came he closed up his hut, and lit his lamp and lay and trembled till morning. Many a time he thought in his heart he would have been better in the bottom of the sea, his bones rolling there with the others.

All this while he kept by the inside of the island, for the huts were on the shore of the lagoon, and it was there the palms grew best, and the lagoon itself abounded with good fish. And to the other side he went once only, and he looked but once at the beach of the ocean, and came away shaking. For the look of it, with its bright sand, and strewn shells, and strong sun and surf went sore against his inclination.

“It cannot be,” he thought, “and yet it is very like. And how do I know? These white men, although they pretend to know where they are sailing, must take their chance like other people. So that after all we may have sailed in a circle, and I may be quite near to Molokai, and this may be the very beach where my father-in-law gathered his dollars.”

So after that he was prudent, and kept to the land-side.

It was perhaps a month later, when the people of the place arrived—the fill of six great boats. They were a fine race of men, and spoke a tongue that sounded very different from the tongue of Hawaii, but so many of the words were the same that it was not difficult to understand. The men besides were very courteous, and the women very towardly; and they made Keola welcome, and built him a house, and gave him

a wife; and what surprised him the most, he was never sent to work with the young men.

And now Keola had three periods. First he had a period of being very sad, and then he had a period when he was pretty merry. Last of all came the third, when he was the most terrified man in the four oceans.

The cause of the first period was the girl he had to wife. He was in doubt about the island, and he might have been in doubt about the speech, of which he had heard so little when he came there with the wizard on the mat. But about his wife there was no mistake conceivable, for she was the same girl that ran from him crying in the wood. So he had sailed all this way, and might as well have stayed in Molokai; and had left home and wife and all his friends for no other cause but to escape his enemy, and the place he had come to was the wizard's hunting-ground, and the place where he walked invisible. It was at this period when he kept the most close to the lagoon-side, and as far as he dared, abode in the cover of his hut.

The cause of the second period was talk he heard from his wife and the chief islanders. Keola himself said little. He was never so sure of his new friends, for he judged they were too civil to be wholesome, and since he had grown better acquainted with his father-in-law the man had grown more cautious. So he told them nothing of himself, but only his name and descent, and that he came from the Eight Islands, and what fine islands they were; and about the King's palace in Honolulu, and how he was a chief friend of the King and the missionaries. But he put many questions and learned much. The island where he was was called the Isle of Voices; it belonged to the tribe, but they made their home upon another, three hours' sail to the southward. There they lived and had their permanent houses, and it was a rich island,

where were eggs and chickens and pigs, and ships came trading with rum and tobacco. It was there the schooner had gone after Keola deserted; there, too, the mate had died, like the fool of a white man as he was. It seems, when the ship came, it was the beginning of the sickly season in that isle, when the fish of the lagoon are poisonous, and all who eat of them swell up and die. The mate was told of it; he saw the boats preparing, because in that season the people leave that island and sail to the Isle of Voices; but he was a fool of a white man, who would believe no stories but his own, and he caught one of these fish, cooked it and ate it, and swelled up and died, which was good news to Keola. As for the Isle of Voices, it lay solitary the most part of the year, only now and then a boat's crew came for copra, and in the bad season, when the fish at the main isle were poisonous, the tribe dwelt there in a body. It had its name from a marvel, for it seemed the sea-side of it was all beset with invisible devils; day and night you heard them talking one with another in strange tongues; day and night little fires blazed up and were extinguished on the beach; and what was the cause of these doings no man might conceive. Keola asked them if it were the same in their own island where they stayed, and they told him no, not there; nor yet in any other of some hundred isles that lay all about them in that sea; but it was a thing peculiar to the Isle of Voices. They told him also that these fires and voices were ever on the sea-side and in the seaward fringes of the wood, and a man might dwell by the lagoon two thousand years (if he could live so long) and never be any way troubled; and even on the sea-side the devils did no harm if let alone. Only once a chief had cast a spear at one of the voices, and the same night he fell out of a cocoanut-palm and was killed.

Keola thought a good bit with himself. He saw he would

be all right when the tribe returned to the main island, and right enough where he was, if he kept by the lagoon, yet he had a mind to make things righter if he could. So he told the high chief he had once been in an isle that was pestered the same way, and the folk had found a means to cure that trouble.

“There was a tree growing in the bush there,” says he, “and it seems these devils came to get the leaves of it. So the people of the isle cut down the tree wherever it was found, and the devils came no more.”

They asked what kind of a tree this was, and he showed them the tree of which Kalamake burned the leaves. They found it hard to believe, yet the idea tickled them. Night after night the old men debated it in their councils, but the high chief (though he was a brave man) was afraid of the matter, and reminded them daily of the chief who cast a spear against the voices and was killed, and the thought of that brought all to a stand again.

Though he could not yet bring about the destruction of the trees, Keola was well enough pleased, and began to look about him and take pleasure in his days; and, among other things, he was the kinder to his wife, so that the girl began to love him greatly. One day he came to the hut, and she lay on the ground lamenting.

“Why,” said Keola, “what is wrong with you now?”

She declared it was nothing.

The same night she woke him. The lamp burned very low, but he saw by her face she was in sorrow.

“Keola,” she said, “put your ear to my mouth that I may whisper, for no one must hear us. Two days before the boats begin to be got ready, go you to the sea-side of the isle and lie in a thicket. We shall choose that place beforehand, you and I; and hide food; and every night I shall come near by

there singing. So when a night comes and you do not hear me, you shall know we are clean gone out of the island, and you may come forth again in safety."

The soul of Keola died within him.

"What is this?" he cried. "I cannot live among devils. I will not be left behind upon this isle. I am dying to leave it."

"You will never leave it alive, my dear Keola," said the girl; "for to tell you the truth, my people are eaters of men; but this they keep secret. And the reason they will kill you before we leave is because in our island ships come, and Donat-Kimaran comes and talks for the French, and there is a white trader there in a house with a veranda, and a catechist. Oh, that is a fine place indeed! The trader has barrels filled with flour, and a French warship once came in the lagoon and gave everybody wine and biscuit. Ah, my poor Keola, I wish I could take you there, for great is my love to you, and it is the finest place in the seas except Papeete."

So now Keola was the most terrified man in the four oceans. He had heard tell of eaters of men in the south islands, and the thing had always been a fear to him; and here it was knocking at his door. He had heard besides, by travelers, of their practises, and how when they are in a mind to eat a man, they cherish and fondle him like a mother with a favorite baby. And he saw this must be his own case; and that was why he had been housed, and fed, and wived, and liberated from all work; and why the old men and the chiefs discoursed with him like a person of weight. So he lay on his bed and railed upon his destiny; and the flesh curdled on his bones.

The next day the people of the tribe were very civil, as their way was. They were elegant speakers, and they made beautiful poetry, and jested at meals, so that a missionary must have died laughing. It was little enough Keola cared

for their fine ways; all he saw was the white teeth shining in their mouths, and his gorge rose at the sight; and when they were done eating, he went and lay in the bush like a dead man.

The next day it was the same, and then his wife followed him.

“Keola,” she said, “if you do not eat, I tell you plainly you will be killed and cooked to-morrow. Some of the old chiefs are murmuring already. They think you are fallen sick and must lose flesh.”

With that Keola got to his feet, and anger burned in him.

“It is little I care one way or the other,” said he. “I am between the devil and the deep sea. Since die I must, let me die the quickest way; and since I must be eaten at the best of it, let me rather be eaten by hobgoblins than by men. Farewell,” said he, and he left her standing, and walked to the sea-side of the island.

It was all bare in the strong sun; there was no sign of man, only the beach was trodden, and all about him as he went, the voices talked and whispered, and the little fires sprang up and burned down. All tongues of the earth were spoken there: the French, the Dutch, the Russian, the Tamil, the Chinese. Whatever land knew sorcery, there were some of its people whispering in Keola’s ear. That beach was thick as a cried fair, yet no man seen; and as he walked he saw the shells vanish before him, and no man to pick them up. I think the devil would have been afraid to be alone in such a company; but Keola was past fear and courted death. When the fires sprang up, he charged for them like a bull. Bodiless voices called to and fro; unseen hands poured sand upon the flames; and they were gone from the beach before he reached them.

“It is plain Kalamake is not here,” he thought, “as I must have been killed long since.”

With that he sat him down in the margin of the wood, for he was tired, and put his chin upon his hands. The business before his eyes continued; the beach babbled with voices, and the fires sprang up and sank, and the shells vanished and were renewed again even while he looked.

“It was a by-day when I was here before,” he thought, “for it was nothing to this.”

And his head was dizzy with the thought of these millions and millions of dollars, and all these hundreds and hundreds of persons culling them upon the beach and flying in the air higher and swifter than eagles.

“And to think how they have fooled me with their talk of mints,” says he, “and that money was made there, when it is clear that all the new coin in all the world is gathered on these sands! But I will know better the next time!” said he.

And at last, he knew not very well how or when, sleep fell on Keola, and he forgot the island and all his sorrows.

Early the next day, before the sun was yet up, a bustle woke him. He awoke in fear, for he thought the tribe had caught him napping; but it was no such matter. Only, on the beach in front of him, the bodiless voices called and shouted one upon another, and it seemed they all passed and swept beside him up the coast of the island.

“What is afoot now?” thinks Keola. And it was plain to him it was something beyond ordinary, for the fires were not lighted nor the shells taken, but the bodiless voices kept posting up the beach, and hailing and dying away; and others following, and by the sound of them these wizards should be angry.

"It is not me they are angry at," thought Keola, "for they pass me close."

As when hounds go by, or horses in a race, or city folk coursing to a fire, and all men join and follow after, so it was now with Keola; and he knew not what he did, nor why he did it, but there, lo and behold! he was running with the voices.

So he turned one point of the island, and this brought him in view of a second; and there he remembered the wizard trees to have been growing by the score together in a wood. From this point there went up a hubbub of men crying not to be described; and by the sound of them, those that he ran with shaped their course for the same quarter. A little nearer, and there began to mingle with the outcry the crash of many axes. And at this a thought came at last into his mind that the high chief had consented; that the men of the tribe had set to cutting down these trees; that word had gone about the isle from sorcerer to sorcerer, and these were all now assembling to defend their trees. Desire of strange things swept him on. He posted with the voices, crossed the beach, and came into the borders of the wood, and stood astonished. One tree had fallen, others were part hewed away. There was the tribe clustered. They were back to back, and bodies lay, and blood flowed among their feet. The hue of fear was on all their faces; their voices went up to heaven shrill as a weasel's cry.

Have you seen a child when he is all alone and has a wooden sword, and fights, leaping and hewing with the empty air? Even so the man-eaters huddled back to back and heaved up their axes, and laid on, and screamed as they laid on, and behold! no man to contend with them! only here and there Keola saw an axe swinging over against them without hands; and time and again a man of the tribe would

fall before it, clove in twain or burst asunder, and his soul sped howling.

For a while Keola looked upon this prodigy like one that dreams, and then fear took him by the midst as sharp as death, that he should behold such doings. Even in that same flash the high chief of the clan espied him standing, and pointed and called out his name. Thereat the whole tribe saw him also, and their eyes flashed, and their teeth clashed.

"I am too long here," thought Keola, and ran farther out of the wood and down the beach, not caring whither.

"Keola!" said a voice close by upon the empty sand.

"Lehua! is that you?" he cried, and gasped, and looked in vain for her; but by the eyesight he was stark alone.

"I saw you pass before," the voice answered; "but you would not hear me. Quick! get the leaves and herbs, and let us flee."

"You are there with the mat?" he asked.

"Here, at your side," said she. And he felt her arms about him. "Quick! the leaves and the herbs, before my father can get back!"

So Keola ran for his life, and fetched the wizard fuel; and Lehua guided him back, and set his feet upon the mat, and made the fire. All the time of its burning, the sound of the battle towered out of the wood; the wizards and the man-eaters hard at fight; the wizards, the viewless ones, roaring out aloud like bulls upon the mountain, and the men of the tribe replying shrill and savage out of the terror of their souls. And all the time of the burning, Keola stood there and listened, and shook, and watched how the unseen hands of Lehua poured the leaves. She poured them fast, and the flame burned high, and scorched Keola's hands; and she speeded and blew the burning with her breath. The last leaf

was eaten, the flame fell, and the shock followed, and there were Keola and Lehua in the room at home.

Now, when Keola could see his wife at last he was mighty pleased, and he was mighty pleased to be home again in Molokai and sit down beside a bowl of poi—for they make no poi on board ships, and there was none in the Isle of Voices—and he was out of the body with pleasure to be clean escaped out of the hands of the eaters of men. But there was another matter not so clear, and Lehua and Keola talked of it all night and were troubled. There was Kalamake left upon the isle. If, by the blessing of God, he could but stick there, all were well; but should he escape and return to Molokai, it would be an ill day for his daughter and her husband. They spoke of his gift of swelling, and whether he could wade that distance in the seas. But Keola knew by this time where that island was—and that is to say, in the Low or Dangerous Archipelago. So they fetched the atlas and looked upon the distance in the map, and by what they could make of it, it seemed a far way for an old gentleman to walk. Still, it would not do to make too sure of a warlock like Kalamake, and they determined at last to take counsel of a white missionary.

So the first one that came by Keola told him everything. And the missionary was very sharp on him for taking the second wife in the low island; but for all the rest, he vowed he could make neither head nor tail of it.

“However,” says he, “if you think this money of your father’s ill-gotten, my advice to you would be give some of it to the lepers and some to the missionary fund. And as for this extraordinary rigmarole, you cannot do better than keep it to yourselves.”

But he warned the police at Honolulu that, by all he

could make out, Kalamake and Keola had been coining false money, and it would not be amiss to watch them.

Keola and Lehua took his advice, and gave many dollars to the lepers and the fund. And no doubt the advice must have been good, for from that day to this, Kalamake has never more been heard of. But whether he was slain in the battle by the trees, or whether he is still kicking his heels upon the Isle of Voices, who shall say?

THE SUNKEN LAND

BY GEORGE W. BAYLY

It was eleven o'clock in the morning when Tom O'Grady and I rode into a remote little Cree village some hundreds of miles northwest of Edmonton, Alberta.

We were both members of the Royal Canadian Northwest Mounted Police (commonly called Mounties) and wore the scarlet jacket of that famous force. We had been detailed for special duty to find and bring back the slayers of a certain half-breed at Athabasca Landing. When last noticed the murderers had been headed in this direction, but since then two months had elapsed, and we had not obtained the faintest trace of their whereabouts.

It was, therefore, without much hope that we rode through the scattered lodges in search of the chief of the roving band. As we approached the center of the village our attention was attracted by a small crowd of Indians standing and squatting in a large semi-circle around a solitary white man seated on a soap box at the entrance to the chief's lodge. The man was sturdy and thickset, and gave one the impression of possessing great physical strength. His present attitude was one of calm and complete detachment, but as we approached he turned his head in our direction and called out:

"Hullo Gerald! hullo Tom! You're the very men I want to see."

It was the Dominion Government doctor on one of his

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periodical visits to the wandering tribes in that section of the Northwest Territories.

"What's up?" I asked, dismounting.

"I've found a dead white man in here," he answered, "and at the same time I've unearthed a mystery. Sit down and I'll show you."

As soon as we were seated he took a small match box from his pocket and handed it to me. Inside it there were ten small stones. I examined them carefully.

"They're diamonds," I said.

“Now, look at this,” and he took a rough, torn piece of brown paper out of his pocketbook. On the paper, evidently part of a rough diary, were the following disjointed notes:

entered the sunken land
S. lost. No tra
ip
Blue Clay Island
Lat. $60^{\circ} 30'$ Long. $127^{\circ} 10'$
150 miles
B. very sick. Must ge
ack

One glance at this scrap of paper was enough to show me that we were on the trail of the murderers. S. could mean but one thing, Sam Elliott, one of the men we were after, and B. must be Bad Bill Blake.

“Now let’s see the dead man. If it’s the one I think it is we’ll know where to find the others. Eh, Tom?”

We followed the doctor into the teepee. One look was enough. Pat Corbeau, the ring leader of the gang, had committed his last crime. It was now up to us to gather in his accomplices, dead or alive.

“When do we start?” asked the doctor as we came out into the sunlight once more.

"We?" I said. "Are you coming with us, then?"

"Why not?" he answered, shortly.

"Don't get sore, Doc. We'll be tickled to death to have you, but it's going to be one hell of a boring trip."

"That's where you're wrong," said the doctor. "I've heard rumors of this sunken land, tho' I've never met a soul that's been there; but that there's something uncanny and altogether horrible about the place, I fully believe. Take that scrap of diary for instance. Read it by what's left unsaid, and you'll see what I mean."

"Nice cheery document," I remarked as I glanced at it again. "We'll bury Pat this afternoon and start off on the trail to-morrow forenoon. How does that hit you, Doc?"

"Fine," said that laconic individual without turning, as he strode off towards his own tent on the outskirts of the encampment. "Now we eat." We followed him a few paces behind.

It was two weeks later. The day was far advanced, and the sun, low on the distant horizon, was sinking into a bed of heavy black clouds. Away to the south a range of mountains stood sharply silhouetted against the sky.

We were preparing camp, quietly, steadily, methodically; for the spirit of the trail had taken hold of us and conversation was reduced to a minimum. The horses had been taken back by the Indians some four days previously, and we were now entirely upon our own resources. We stood on the threshold of the unknown. Up to that point our journey had been a commonplace of northern travel. Work, danger, monotony, they had all come in the day's run. We had crossed many rivers, we had traversed a mountain range, until one day we had descended to a vast plain which stretched northwest as far as the eye could reach. This plain was typical northern country, grass land alternating with

stretches of stunted black spruce and white birch, and stretches there were too, where sand and glacial boulders predominated, but this was all past. In front of us, straight into the sunset, lay a low range of undulating hills.

After supper we smoked in silence for a time; finally the Doctor pointed to the hills.

"If I'm not mistaken, the Sunken Land begins beyond that low range. What latitude and longitude did you make it at noon to-day, Geráld?"

I took out my notebook.

"My observation gave us an approximate latitude of 61 degrees 50' and a longitude of 126 degrees 40'. The sun was rather obscured so I can't be quite certain of my figures."

"That's near enough," said the Doctor. "We enter the Sunken Land to-morrow, and don't forget our agreement. Not one of us must ever, even for an instant, be separated from the other two. There's something queer about that country, and it's through getting separated that that other party came to grief; at least that's the way I have it figured. So let's keep together."

The next morning we began the climb of the low range. Following a little valley we slowly ascended until we came to where it flattened out; we had reached the top. In front and below stretched a panorama of broken country, low hills alternating everywhere with plains, but the astonishing thing was that the whole country sloped downwards. As far as the eye could reach the hills continued.

"The whole land seems to have sunk," said Tom. "That hill on the horizon line must be thousands of feet below us."

I took out my field glasses and focused them on the horizon line.

"I can't see any sign of the lake," I said as I handed them to the Doctor.

"I don't suppose you can," he remarked. "If that diary is correct it's one hundred and fifty miles from here."

All day we traveled carefully, warily, expecting every moment to have to defend our lives against some hidden peril, but nothing out of the ordinary occurred. During the past weeks we had often discussed the fate of the men who had preceded us into this land, but the subject was baffling, as we had no clue as to the manner of their death.

Now that we had actually seen the country spread out before us, a feeling of vague alarm had taken hold of us—none of us could explain why. The country looked so very peaceful, but I could not help thinking of a story I had read, where ants the size of rats and of unparalleled ferocity inhabited a tract of barren rolling country somewhere on the borders of Afghanistan, and devoured all that came in their path. No animals could escape as they could run with incredible swiftness; consequently the country was entirely denuded of game. I told this tale to my companions, and though they appeared to treat it as a joke, I noticed that their watchfulness increased.

Sometimes we climbed the rounded hills, at others we descended their farther slopes, but always the descent was longer than the ascent. Towards the end of the second day we noticed a distinct change in the temperature. The country was getting warmer; vegetation, too, began to increase; scattered pine, tamarack and birch trees became more numerous and game became abundant (thus exploding the ant theory). Rabbits in particular seemed to overrun the whole country, while deer were quite plentiful. But the face of the country was undergoing a steady change; woods were appearing, taking the place of scattered trees; alder and

ash also became abundant, and finally I noticed a stunted elm.

"I say, by Jove, this is interesting," said Tom. "See the squirrels and small birds. Why, the country is simply crawling with game."

Being interested in forestry I found this change in forest conditions fascinating in the extreme. The country was, in fact, a paradise; nothing untoward had yet happened, and all sense of approaching disaster seemed to have vanished. The very air seemed clearer. In fact, we acted as if the danger were behind, rather than in front of us; unless the diary lied.

That night we camped by a small stream. Rising early the next morning, we had been on the march for a couple of hours when Tom suddenly stopped.

"Do you fellows notice anything?"

We stood still and listened.

"I can't say I hear anything," said I.

"Nor I," said the Doctor.

"That's it," Tom replied. "There's nothing to hear; the game's gone. I haven't seen a rabbit or heard a bird for the last hour." We looked at each other.

"That's true," I said. "I wonder what's the trouble."

We looked carefully on every side; the country seemed the same.

"Nothing's changed from yesterday," said Tom finally.

"The trees are larger," I remarked.

"And there seem to be more creepers," added the Doctor.

"There's something queer about this," sputtered Tom. "Keep your rifles ready."

At noon we stopped in a little grassy clearing.

"Look, there's a rabbit!" I cried. "See the way it's running; something's chasing it."

We sprang to our feet, seizing our rifles. The creature tore past us without even noticing our presence, squealing as if in the most mortal terror, and disappeared in the opposite direction. Then all was still again. Not a sound broke the stillness.

"I don't know," said the Doctor. "I feel as if something were watching us."

"Yes, I feel that same way," said Tom, "but it's only natural. Fear is catching, even a rabbit's. It was probably only a weasel."

We agreed heartily, too heartily perhaps.

"Let's be moving," I suggested.

Before us the forest appeared much thicker and the trees much larger, and I pointed out some oak and beech, as well as a few very large elms. The temperature was almost oppressively hot.

That night when we camped we chose an open space and lit a large fire, taking turns to keep watch, but nothing tangible occurred. The night was oppressively still, yet all through the night there were vague sounds and rustling and faint whisperings, now louder, now fainter; that was all. There was an uncanny strangeness about it which made us distinctly uneasy.

The next morning we talked it over and the Doctor's opinion was that if at any time we were out at night, it would be a good plan to carry torches. This suggestion met with approval, so we spent an hour before starting out in making a few for each of us, and fastened them to our pack sacks.

All next day the temperature kept rising, and as we progressed, the vegetation became more and more tropical.

We were now progressing in single file along a trail, made in all probability by the ill-fated party which had preceded us, as the forest growth had not yet had time to obliterate the recent traces of man's handiwork.

As night approached we began to look around for an open clearing, for the prospect of spending the night in the thick undergrowth, among these giant trees in the presence of an unknown peril, was far from reassuring. To make matters worse the ground was becoming swampy; little stagnant pools and rotten vegetation appeared on every side, making the going more and more difficult.

Suddenly Tom, who was leading, stopped and remarked:

"It's no use going on. This may get worse and worse instead of better, and we can't camp here, so I think we'd better go back to the last clearing we passed. How far do you think it is, Doc?"

"Two miles, I should think."

"All right then, about turn and we'll have to hurry. The sun's just setting."

The darkness came on quickly, the great trees shutting out the afterglow, and we were soon straggling along in a very uneven manner, the Doctor now leading, and Tom bringing up the rear. The uneasy feeling of the previous night began to take hold of us and at the same time our resolution about torches flashed into my mind. Without a moment's pause I stopped and, calling to the others, pulled out a torch and lit it. The others did the same.

"That's better," said Tom. "Now we can at least see where we're going."

But the flare and flicker of the smoky torches only seemed to accentuate the darkness of the forest about us, and as I glanced from side to side I felt sure that again an evil pres-

ence, a gruesome, nameless terror, was keeping pace with us on either hand. I spoke about it to the others. They too, felt the same fear. The night was dreadfully still, but again we noticed a faint whispering sound; but now it seemed all around us.

Suddenly the whispering seemed to grow louder and more menacing. I saw the Doctor start to run; already he appeared a long way ahead. All at once the torch disappeared from view, for the trail had taken a bend. At that moment we, too, started to run—wildly. I had felt something soft and clammy grasp my throat, while I thought I felt innumerable little feelers gripping my face and body. With a scream I fought them off with my torch, and realized a moment later that my nerve was going and that the little feelers had only been a creeper and the branches of some trees. A moment later I was running close behind the Doctor. Suddenly I turned round.

“My God!” I cried. “Where’s Tom!”

We started down the trail, the hair literally rising on our heads. There was nothing but black darkness behind us and from the darkness came a hum as of angry bees. Suddenly—there was a distant shout.

“Ger-ald—Ger-ald. Come back—my torch has gone out,” and then—then came a prolonged scream of agony and terror—“help—Gerald—hel—” followed by a choking cry of mortal terror. Then silence.

Throwing off our packs we raced along the trail at top speed. When we reached the spot where he had been we found his rifle and his pack, evidently thrown off in the desperation of a fight for life. And—that was all. Tom had completely vanished. We searched the ground with our torches and called and called and fired our rifles—but all to

no purpose. No sound broke the stillness of the night. Even the whispering had ceased.

We returned to the trail and, fetching our packs, we brought them back to the place where Tom had disappeared. Then we gave way to utter despair.

How long we sat I don't know, but it must have been some considerable time, for the first thing that roused us was the dying splutter of my torch, which had been stuck into the ground at our feet. This effectually brought us back to a sense of our position and to the danger of thus sitting still. I lit another torch and turned to the Doctor.

"What are we to do now?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't know," he answered. "Camp here I suppose and light a large fire. We'll have to wait for daylight before we can do anything."

As soon as we had a good fire going we put out our torches, and making ourselves as comfortable as the swampy condition of the ground would allow, we lit our pipes and settled down to wait for morning.

An hour passed: then softly, ever so softly, a faint, almost imperceptible murmur began to come from the tree tops.

"Sounds like a breeze," I said, tilting my head a trifle to listen.

"Yes, it does," assented the Doctor, "but unfortunately we know it's no such thing. Throw some more wood on the fire."

"What do you think it is?" I asked, as in strained attention we listened to the increasing murmur.

"God knows," answered the Doctor, with a shrug.

"Do you think a rifle is any good against it?" I went on.

"No, I do not," he replied shortly.

"Why?"

"To tell you the truth, I don't know," he said.

"I've been thinking over the events of the last few hours," I went on, "and there are one or two things that strike me as especially curious."

"For instance?" suggested the Doctor.

"Well—for one thing," I said, "We're in a far northern latitude, yet because this country is many thousands of feet below the upper plain, the temperature has increased to such an extent that all the conditions of life down here are tropical."

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Doctor, impatiently, "I know all that. We've discussed it many times."

"But this is my point," I said. "These are *not* the tropics. This is an entirely abnormal condition, therefore life as we know it may have undergone a complete change, or at least a modification."

The Doctor nodded. "Go on."

"In that case the animal and vegetable life may have characteristics entirely unknown to us, and quite foreign to those with which we are accustomed to deal."

The Doctor was lost in thought.

"I see what you mean, but don't generalize. Come down to something definite."

"That I can't do," I answered, "but I have a suspicion that this thing which is menacing us is more or less impalpable, *but* is armed with innumerable feelers, which I actually felt round my throat and on my face and all over my body a while ago."

The Doctor abruptly sat up.

"By God, that's true!" he cried. "I remember feeling them too, but I thought I was imagining things, and decided they were only creepers and branches of trees, after all."

"That's not all," I went on. "The thing can only see at night; light apparently blinds it."

"In that case," said the Doctor, "our best hope lies in our knives and hatchets and in having plenty of light. Throw on some more wood, Gerald."

The next morning we were up at the first hint of daylight, and after a hurried breakfast, determined to prosecute a thorough search for our missing companion, in the faint hope that we might at least gain some clue as to the manner of his death. Plunging into the undergrowth we soon struck a small stream, and advancing in single file along the bank found that it narrowed down to a mere brook, and finally lost itself in a great green morass of sponge-like mosses, into which we sank up to our knees. The place was horribly haunted by clouds of enormous and most venomous mosquitoes. This swamp seemed to extend without end in front and on either side of us.

"It's no use," said the Doctor. "We'll have to give it up and go back and make our way to the lake as quickly as possible."

All day we traveled along the narrow trail, making a slow, but steady speed. For a forest land it was the most wonderful that the imagination of man could conceive. The thick vegetation met overhead, interlacing into a natural pergola, and at last through this tunnel of verdure, in a golden twilight, we caught sight of the lake, beautiful in itself, but marvelous from the strange tints thrown by the light from above filtering through the foliage.

Clear as crystal, motionless as a sheet of glass, green as the edge of an iceberg, it stretched before us. In the center was a small conical island, entirely denuded of trees, while

at our feet, where the trail ended, lay a small raft imbedded in the mud.

"There's our boat," I said.

"Well, we still have about an hour of daylight," said the Doctor. "That treeless island looks the most beautiful place in the world to me at this moment."

Whether it was the sound of our voices or something else, I don't know, but at that instant the whispering began in the tree tops and from moment to moment the sound increased. Looking up we saw leaves and twigs in violent motion high in the crowns of the trees. Too astounded to move, we watched the strange phenomenon. Suddenly and without any warning, a whole tree seemed to spring into life. The giant branches curved down and swept the ground, and every twig and leaf seemed to be stretching out toward us. And at that moment, as if aroused by the clamor of the tree, every plant and shrub began to stir with life, violently agitating their long tentacle-like stems, the edges of which, rasping upon each other, produced a whispering or hissing noise.

"Good God," screamed the Doctor. "The trees, the trees. I'm caught!"

"Use your hatchet," I cried, as I sprang to his rescue and severed a long sinuous tendril that had twined itself round his waist. At the same instant I felt a steel-like vise closing round my ankle, and fell heavily. Turning I saw an enormous plant, which had been near the path, waving its tentacles like a huge octopus. It had a short thick trunk, from the top of which radiated giant tentacles, narrow and flexible, but of extraordinary tenaciousness. The edges were armed with barbs or dagger-like teeth. It was one of these sinewy feelers which, inclined at an angle from the trunk, had laid itself flat upon the ground and at the touch of my boot had risen and, like a gigantic serpent, had entwined itself about

me and was drawing me towards the center of the stump, where my body would soon have been crushed until every drop of blood had been squeezed out of it and absorbed by the ferocious plant.

A cold sweat broke out on my forehead as I noticed other feelers flailing the air in search of me. In the frenzy of despair, I slashed at the tendril round my leg and with two quick blows severed it. Immediately it rolled itself up into the parent stem.

“Run! Run!” I yelled to the Doctor. “Into the lake!”

Tripping and falling and rising again, and slashing to right and left as I ran, cut and bleeding from the giant barbs, I rushed into the lake. Turning, I saw the Doctor madly cutting at a creeper that had him by one arm. In another instant he was free from it, and with a frenzied bound was in the lake beside me, his clothes all torn and his face streaming with blood.

We were up to our waists in water, but safe for the moment from that frightful nightmare. We watched with gruesome fascination the madly tossing forest, the long feelers still groping and searching for us.

“Isn’t it ghastly?” I said.

We were nearly sick with the horror of what we had escaped, but when I had sufficiently recovered my mind and some wind and some of my nerve had come back, I began to look around for some means of escape from the predicament in which we found ourselves. My first thought was of the raft; it looked small and seemed firmly imbedded in the mud. However, with only a small amount of effort we were able to launch it and climb aboard. It was nearly flush with water but with care we were able to cross safely, propelling ourselves by means of a crude sort of sweep which was fastened to one end.

That night, after a good meal from our fast diminishing stores, we slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, untroubled as yet by any fears for the future. Next morning we found our cuts and scratches very sore, but with plenty of iodine and a roll of bandage, we were soon fixed up and ready for the exploration of Blue Clay Island. Climbing the conical hill we found, as I expected, that the center of the island consisted of the crater of a small, extinct volcano, the floor of which was covered with blue clay mixed with small boulders.

"There's your diamond clay," I said.

The Doctor nodded.

We descended into the cup-shaped valley and soon found the spot where the murderers had started to excavate. We spent the rest of the day looking for gems and turning over the solid clay, but we were only rewarded with one minute stone. Whether our want of success was due to lack of experience or to the fact that we did not dig deep enough, I can't say, but the fact remains that that stone was the only one we ever got from the mine.

From this time on our every effort was bent towards trying to find a way of escape, but we were stopped at every turn. We circled the lake in an endeavor to find a landing place, but everywhere the trees seemed to sense our approach, and we dared not land. Two or three days passed in this way, while we grew more and more desperate. Finally on the evening of the fourth day, as we were sitting by our fire smoking, our energy almost exhausted, the Doctor spoke, deep dejection in his tone.

"It's no use, Gerald. I give up. We'll either have to try to make our way through the forest where we came in or die of starvation. We have only a few more days' grub left."

"Before we do anything as rash as that," I remarked,

"let's tell each other all we know about this place, put all our cards on the table, and we may be able to work something out when we have our data all together. I'll begin. To start with, look at the forest now. Not a leaf stirring, is there?"

The Doctor looked intently at the shore line with my field glasses.

"No, everything is as calm and peaceful as possible."

"Now watch the trees."

I took a fair sized stone and threw it into the lake about a quarter of the way across. There was a big splash.

"Any sign?" I asked.

"No."

"Well, look at the water line where it meets the shore by the big pine and keep looking and tell me when the ripples get there."

"All right," he said a moment later. "They're lapping the bank."

"Now look at the tops," I directed.

The Doctor uttered an ejaculation. "That's a remarkable thing. They're all in motion. Whatever made you think of that, Gerald?"

"You see," I went on, "how hopeless it is to try to reach the shore without letting the trees know of our approach."

"That's true," said the Doctor, "but we can land on that little sand beach just to the right of the path."

"Yes, that's point number two. And number three is, the nearer the lake the fiercer the trees."

"I don't see any more points," said the Doctor slowly.

For a long time we sat moodily staring into the fire. Then, slowly at first, but finally with a flash of inspiration, the idea came, and I smiled. The Doctor, who had been watching me dejectedly, suddenly exclaimed:

"You've got a plan, Gerald. Spit it out."

I pointed to the fire. "We'll burn the forest," I said.

Ever since our first entry into the Sunken Land, the weather had been dry; consequently the timber on the island, which had all been cut down by our predecessors, was in first class condition to start a fire. The only question was: would that forest burn?

"We'll have to build a bonfire on the beach and have everything all set for the first big wind from the northwest," I said.

"A regular funeral pyre," remarked the Doctor.

For the next two days we toiled from daylight to dark, ferrying logs and brushwood across the lake and scientifically building a large square pile which covered the center beach, and at the apex, for the top was conical, was nearly fifteen feet high. The forest at this point consisted of a pure stand of pine, mostly longleaf, with some loblolly admixture, which was a great piece of luck for us, as this pine is highly resinous.

Our preparations were now all made; the wind only was wanting. We made a number of torches and got everything in readiness. Then, while waiting for the weather to change, tried our luck with the blue clay once more, but with no success.

Four days passed. Then one night I was awakened by feeling a strong breeze from the northwest blowing over me. Quickly rousing the Doctor we sat up and listened.

"It's rising," I said.

"Yes, it's rising, but we're going to have rain. We haven't a minute to lose."

Hurrying down to the raft we paddled across.

When we got back to the island our landing was as bright as day in the light of that enormous fire, which, fanned by

the rising wind, was roaring above the tops of the nearest trees.

"Let's go up to the highest point of the island," I suggested, "so that we can follow the course the fire takes with our field glasses."

The conflagration was now well within the pine stand, and was already beginning to spread fanwise; momentarily the wind increased, driving clouds of sparks and dense clouds of smoke high into the air. We watched it fascinated; our lives hung upon the result.

I handed the glasses to the Doctor. "The fire has reached the mixed forest. Will the deciduous trees burn?"

The Doctor pointed to the East. "Look, Gerald, the dawn."

"I feel a drop of rain," I said.

Overhead heavy gray rain clouds were tearing across the sky.

"Let's cross," suggested the Doctor.

"No use," I replied. "We'll have to wait until to-morrow morning."

Late in the afternoon we crossed to have a look at things. The rain was coming down in torrents, and the wind had dropped to a gusty breeze. We made our way into the charred forest for a couple of hundred yards. Nothing molested us; apparently our way lay open.

The next morning we made an early start, for the weather had cleared and a bright sun was shining. We followed the path of the fire all morning until we reached the edge of the green morass where Tom had disappeared. Here the fire had burned itself out, but its purpose had been accomplished. We were safe.

The object of the expedition from an official point of view had been achieved, but at a terrible cost. Poor Tom had

paid with his life, and to us the price seemed far too high. It is true that no trace of the last of the murderers, Blake, had been found, but we had had sufficient proof of the impossibility of escaping from the island in any other way than that which we had taken.

He had tried to pass the forest and had—failed.

TWO SPINSTERS

BY E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

ERNESTON GRANT was without doubt a very first-class detective, but as a wayfarer across Devonshire byroads with only a map and a compass to help him he was simply a wash-out. Even his fat little white dog, Flip, sheltered under a couple of rugs, after two hours of cold, wet, and purposeless journeying, looked at him reproachfully. With an exclamation of something like despair, Grant brought his sobbing automobile to a standstill at the top of one of the wickedest hills a Ford had ever been asked to face even on first speed, and sat looking around him.

In every direction the outlook was the same. There were rolling stretches of common divided by wooded valleys of incredible depth. There was no sign of agricultural land, no sign of the working of any human being upon the endless acres, and not a single vehicle had he passed upon the way. There were no sign-posts, no villages, no shelter of any sort. The one thing that abounded was rain—rain and mist. Gray wreaths of it hung over the commons, making them seem like falling fragments of cloud, blotted out the horizon, hung over every hopeful break in the distance—an encircling, enveloping obscurity. Then, vying with the mists in wetness, came the level rain—rain which had seemed beautiful early in the afternoon, slanting from the heavens onto the mountainside, but which had long ago lost all pretense to being anything but damnably offensive, chilling, miserably wet.

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Flip, whose nose only now appeared uncovered, sniffed disgustedly, and Grant, as he lit a pipe, cursed slowly but fluently under his breath. What a country! Miles of byways without a single direction post, endless stretches without a glimpse of a farmhouse or village. And the map! Grant solemnly cursed the man who had ordained it, the printer who had bound it, and the shop where he had bought it. When he had finished Flip ventured upon a gentle bark of approval.

"Somewhere or other," Grant muttered to himself, "should lie the village of Nidd. The last sign-post in this blasted region indicated six miles to Nidd. Since then we have traveled at least twelve, there has been no turning to the left or to the right, and the village of Nidd is as though it had never been."

His eyes pierced the gathering darkness ahead. Through a slight uplifting in the clouds it seemed to him that he could see for miles, and nowhere was there any sign of village or of human habitation. He thought of the road along which they had come, and the idea of retracing it made him shiver. It was at that moment, when bending forward to watch the steam from his boiling radiator, that he saw away on the left a feebly flickering light. Instantly he was out of the car. He scrambled onto the stone wall and looked eagerly in the direction from which he had seen it. There was without doubt a light; around that light must be a house. His eyes could even trace the rough track that led to it. He climbed back to his place, thrust in his clutch, drove for about forty yards, and then paused at a gate. The track on the other side was terrible, but then so was the road. He opened it and drove through, bending over his task now with every sense absorbed.

Apparently traffic here, if traffic existed at all, consisted

only of an occasional farm wagon of the kind he was beginning to know all about—springless, with holes in the boarded floor and with great, slowly turning wheels. Nevertheless he made progress, skirted the edge of a tremendous combe, passed, to his joy, a semi-cultivated field, through another gate, up it seemed suddenly into the clouds, and down a fantastic corkscrew way until at last the light faced him directly ahead. He passed a deserted garden and pulled up before a broken-down iron gate which he had to get out of the car to open. He punctiliously closed it after him, traversed a few yards of grass-grown, soggy avenue, and finally reached the door of what might once have been a very tolerable farmhouse, but which appeared now, notwithstanding the flickering light burning upstairs, to be one of the most melancholy edifices the mind of man could conceive.

With scant anticipations in the way of a welcome, but with immense relief at the thought of a roof, Grant descended and knocked upon the oak door. Inside he could hear almost at once the sound of a match being struck; the light of a candle shone through the blindless windows of a room on his left. There were footsteps in the hall, and the door was opened. Grant found himself confronted by a woman who held the candle so high that it half illumined, half shadowed her features. There was a certain stateliness, however, about her figure which he realized even in those first few seconds at the door.

“What do you want?” she asked.

Grant, as he removed his hat, fancied that the answer was sufficiently obvious. Rain streamed from every angle of his be-mackintoshed body. His face was pinched with the cold.

“I am a traveler who has lost his way,” he explained. “For hours I have been trying to find a village and inn. Yours is

the first human habitation I have seen. Can you give me a night's shelter?"

"Is there any one with you?" the woman inquired.

"I am alone," he replied. "Except for my little dog," he added, as he heard Flip's hopeful yap.

The woman considered.

"You had better drive your car into the shed on the left-hand side of the house," she said. "Afterwards you can come in. We will do what we can for you. It is not much."

"I am very grateful, madam," Grant declared in all sincerity.

He found the shed, which was occupied only by two farm carts in an incredible state of decay. Afterwards he released Flip and returned to the front door which had been left open. Guided by the sound of crackling logs, he found his way to a huge stone kitchen. In a high-backed chair in front of the fire, seated with her hands upon her knees but gazing eagerly towards the door as though watching for his coming, was another woman, also tall, approaching middle age, perhaps, but still of striking presence and fine features. The woman who had admitted him was bending over the fire. He looked from one to the other in amazement. They were fearfully and wonderfully alike.

"It is very kind of you, ladies, to give us shelter," he began. "Flip! Behave yourself, Flip!"

A huge sheep dog had occupied the space in front of the fire. Flip without a moment's hesitation had run towards him, yapping fiercely. The dog, with an air of mild surprise, rose to his feet and looked inquiringly downwards. Flip insinuated herself into the vacant place, stretched herself out with an air of content, and closed her eyes.

"I must apologize for my little dog," Grant continued. "She is very cold."

The sheep dog retreated a few yards and sat on his haunches considering the matter. Meanwhile the woman who had opened the door produced a cup and saucer from a cupboard, a loaf of bread, and a small side of bacon, from which she cut some slices.

“Draw your chair to the fire,” she invited. “We have very little to offer you, but I will prepare something to eat.”

“You are good Samaritans indeed,” Grant declared fervently.

He seated himself opposite the woman who as yet had scarcely spoken or removed her eyes from his. The likeness between the two was an amazing thing, as was also their silence. They wore similar clothes—heavy, voluminous clothes they seemed to him—and their hair, brown and slightly besprinkled with gray, was arranged in precisely the same fashion. Their clothes belonged to another world, as did also their speech and manners, yet there was a curious but unmistakable distinction about them both.

“As a matter of curiosity,” Grant asked, “how far am I from the village of Nidd?”

“Not far,” the woman who was sitting motionless opposite to him answered. “To any one knowing the way, near enough. Strangers are foolish to trust themselves to these roads. Many people are lost who try.”

“Yours is a lonely homestead,” he ventured.

“We were born here,” the woman answered. “Neither my sister nor I have felt the desire for travel.”

The bacon began to sizzle. Flip opened one eye, licked her mouth and sat up. In a few minutes the meal was prepared. A high-backed oak chair was placed at the end of the table. There was tea, a dish of bacon and eggs, a great loaf of bread and a small pat of butter. Grant took his place.

“You have had your supper?” he asked.

"Long ago," the woman who had prepared his meal replied. "Please to serve yourself."

She sank into the other oak chair exactly opposite her sister. Grant, with Flip by his side, commenced his meal. Neither had tasted food for many hours and for a time both were happily oblivious to anything save the immediate surroundings. Presently, however, as he poured out his second cup of tea, Grant glanced towards his hostesses. They had moved their chairs slightly away from the fire and were both watching him—watching him without curiosity, yet with a certain puzzling intentness. It occurred to him then for the first time that although both had in turn addressed him, neither had addressed the other.

"I can't tell you how good this tastes," Grant said presently. "I am afraid I must seem awfully greedy."

"You have been for some time without food, perhaps," one of them said.

"Since half past twelve."

"Are you traveling for pleasure?"

"I thought so before to-day," he answered, with a smile to which there was no response.

The woman who had admitted him moved her chair an inch or two nearer to his. He noticed with some curiosity that immediately she had done so her sister did the same thing.

"What is your name?"

"Erneston Grant," he replied. "May I know whom I have to thank for this hospitality?"

"My name is Mathilda Craske," the first one announced.

"And mine is Annabelle Craske," the other echoed.

"You live here alone?" he ventured.

"We live here entirely alone," Mathilda acquiesced. "It is our pleasure."

Grant was more than ever puzzled. Their speech was subject to the usual Devonshire intonation and soft slurring of the vowels, but otherwise it was almost curiously correct. The idea of their living alone in such a desolate part, however, seemed incredible.

"You farm here, perhaps?" he persisted. "You have laborers' cottages, or some one close at hand?"

Mathilda shook her head.

"The nearest hovel," she confided, "is three miles distant. We have ceased to occupy ourselves with the land. We have five cows—they give us no trouble—and some fowls."

"It is a lonely life," he murmured.

"We do not find it so," Annabelle said stiffly.

He turned his chair towards them. Flip, with a little gurgle of satisfaction, sprang onto his knees.

"Where do you do your marketing?" he asked.

"A carrier from Exford," Mathilda told him, "calls every Saturday. Our wants are simple."

The large room, singularly empty of furniture as he noticed looking round, was full of shadowy places, unilluminated by the single oil lamp. The two women themselves were only dimly visible. Yet every now and then in the flickering firelight he caught a clearer glimpse of them. They were so uncannily alike that they might well be twins. He found himself speculating as to their history. They must once have been very beautiful.

"I wonder whether it will be possible," he asked, after a somewhat prolonged pause, "to encroach further upon your hospitality and beg for a sofa or a bed for the night? Any place will do," he added hastily.

Mathilda rose at once to her feet. She took another candle from the mantelpiece and lit it.

"I will show you," she said, "where you may sleep."

For a moment Grant was startled. He had happened to glance towards Annabelle and was amazed at a sudden curious expression—an expression almost of malice in her face. He stooped to bring her into the little halo of lamplight more completely, and stared at her incredulously. The expression, if ever it had been there, had vanished. She was simply looking at him patiently with something in her face which he failed utterly to understand.

“If you will follow me,” Mathilda invited.

Grant rose to his feet. Flip turned round with a final challenging bark to the huge sheep dog who had accepted a position remote from the fire, and failing to elicit any satisfactory response trotted after her master. They passed into a well-shaped but almost empty hall, up a broad flight of oak stairs to the first landing. Outside the room from which Grant had seen the candlelight she paused for a moment and listened.

“You have another guest?” he inquired.

“Annabelle has a guest,” she replied. “You are mine. Follow me, please.”

She led the way to a bedchamber in which was a huge four-poster and little else. She set the candle upon a table and turned down a sort of crazy quilt which covered the bed-clothes. She felt the sheets and nodded approvingly. Grant found himself unconsciously following her example. To his surprise they were warm. She pointed to a great brass bed-warmer with a long handle at the further end of the room, from which a little smoke was still curling upwards.

“You were expecting someone to-night?” he asked curiously.

“We are always prepared,” she answered.

She left the room, apparently forgetting to wish him good-night. He called out pleasantly after her, but she made

no response. He heard her level footsteps as she descended the stairs. Then again there was silence—silence down below, silence in the part of the house where he was. Flip, who was sniffing round the room, at times showed signs of excitement, at times growled. Grant, opening the window, ventured upon a cigaret.

“Don’t know that I blame you, old girl,” he said. “It’s a queer place.”

Outside there was nothing to be seen and little to be heard save the roaring of a water torrent close at hand and the patter of rain. He suddenly remembered his bag, and, leaving the door of his room open, descended the stairs. In the great stone kitchen the two women were seated exactly as they had been before his coming, and during his meal. They both looked at him but neither spoke.

“If you don’t mind,” he explained, “I want to fetch my bag from the car.”

Mathilda, the woman who had admitted him, nodded acquiescence. He passed out into the darkness, stumbled his way to the shed, and unstrapped his bag. Just as he was turning away he thrust his hand into the tool chest and drew out an electric torch which he slipped into his pocket. When he reëntered the house the two women were still seated in their chairs and still silent.

“A terrible night,” he remarked. “I can’t tell you how thankful I am to you for so hospitably giving me shelter.”

They both looked at him but neither made any reply. This time when he reached his room he closed the door firmly, and noticed with a frown of disappointment that except for the latch there was no means of fastening it. Then he laughed to himself softly. He, the famous captor of Ned Bullivant, the victor in a score of scraps with desperate men, suddenly

nervous in this lonely farmhouse inhabited by a couple of strange women.

"Time I took a holiday," he muttered to himself. "We don't understand nerves, do we, Flip?" he added.

Flip opened one eye and growled. Grant was puzzled.

"Something about she doesn't like," he ruminated. "I wonder who's in the room with the lighted candles?"

He opened his own door once more softly and listened. The silence was almost unbroken. From downstairs in the great kitchen he could hear the ticking of a clock, and he could see the thin streak of yellow light underneath the door. He crossed the landing and listened for a moment outside the room with the candles. The silence within was absolute and complete—not even the sound of the ordinary breathing of a sleeping person. He retraced his steps, closed his own door, and began to undress. At the bottom of his bag was a small automatic. His fingers played with it for a moment. Then he threw it back. The electric torch, however, he placed by the side of his bed. Before he turned in he leaned once more out of the window. The roar of the falling water seemed more insistent than ever. Otherwise there was no sound. The rain had ceased but the sky was black and starless. With a little shiver he turned away and climbed into bed.

He had no idea of the time but the blackness outside was just as intense when he was suddenly awakened by Flip's low growling. She had shaken herself free from the coverlet at the foot of the bed and he could see her eyes, wicked little spots of light, gleaming through the darkness. He lay quite still for a moment, listening. From the first he knew that there was some one in the room. His own quick intuition had told him that, although he was still unable to detect a sound. Slowly his hand traveled out to the side of the bed. He took

up the electric torch and turned it on. Then with an involuntary cry he shrank back. Standing within a few feet of him was Mathilda, still fully dressed, and in her hand, stretched out towards him, was the cruelest-looking knife he had ever seen. He slipped out of bed, and, honestly and self-confessedly afraid, kept the light fixed upon her.

"What do you want?" he demanded, amazed at the unsteadiness of his own voice. "What the mischief are you doing with that knife?"

"I want you, William," she answered, a note of disappointment in her tone. "Why do you keep so far away?"

He lit the candle. The finger which on the trigger of his automatic had kept Bullivant with his hands up for a lifelong two minutes, was trembling. With the light in the room now established, however, he felt more himself.

"Throw that knife on the bed," he ordered, "and tell me what you were going to do with it?"

She obeyed at once and leaned a little towards him.

"I was going to kill you, William," she confessed.

"And why?" he demanded.

She shook her head sorrowfully.

"Because it is the only way," she replied.

"My name isn't William, for one thing," he objected, "and what do you mean by saying it is the only way?"

She smiled, sadly and disbelievingly.

"You should not deny your name," she said. "You are William Foulsham. I knew you at once, though you had been away so long. When *he* came," she added, pointing towards the other room, "Annabelle believed that he was William. I let her keep him. I knew. I knew if I waited you would come."

"Waiving the question of my identity," he struggled on, "why do you want to kill me? What do you mean by saying it is the only way?"

"It is the only way to keep a man," she answered. "Annabelle and I found that out when you left us. You knew each of us loved you, William; you promised each of us never to leave—do you remember? So we sat here and waited for you to come back. We said nothing, but we both knew."

"You mean that you were going to kill me to keep me here?" he persisted.

She looked towards the knife lovingly.

"That isn't killing," she said. "Don't you see—you could never go away. You would be here always."

He began to understand, and a horrible idea stole into his brain.

"What about the man she thought was William?" he asked.

"You shall see him if you like," she answered eagerly. "You shall see how peaceful and happy he is. Perhaps you will be sorry then that you woke up. Come with me."

He possessed himself of the knife and followed her out of the room and across the landing. Underneath the door he could see the little chink of light—the light which had been his beacon from the road. She opened the door softly and held the candle over her head. Stretched upon another huge four-poster bed was the figure of a man with a ragged, untidy beard. His face was as pale as the sheet and Grant knew from the first glance that he was dead. By his side, seated stiffly in a high-backed chair, was Annabelle. She raised her finger and frowned as they entered. She looked across at Grant.

"Step quietly," she whispered. "William is asleep."

Just as the first gleam of dawn was forcing a finger of light through the sullen bank of clouds, a distraught and disheveled-looking man, followed by a small, fat, white dog

stumbled into the village of Nidd, gasped with relief at the sight of the brass plate upon a door, and pulled the bell for all he was worth. Presently a window was opened and a man's shaggy head thrust out.

"Steady there!" he expostulated. "What's the trouble with you, anyway?"

Grant looked up.

"I've spent a part of the night in a farmhouse a few miles from here," he shouted. "There's a dead man there and two mad women and my car's broken down."

"A dead man?" the doctor repeated.

"I've seen him. My car's broken down in the road or I should have been here before."

"I'll be with you in five minutes," the doctor promised.

Presently the two men were seated in the doctor's car on their way back to the farm. It was light now, with signs of clearing, and in a short time they drew up in front of the farmhouse. There was no answer to their knock. The doctor turned the handle of the door and opened it. They entered the kitchen. The fire was out, but each in her high-backed chair, Mathilda and Annabelle were seated, facing one another, speechless, yet with wide-open eyes. They both turned their heads as the two men entered. Annabelle nodded with satisfaction.

"It is the doctor," she said. "Doctor, I am glad that you have come. You know, of course, that William is back. He came for me. He is lying upstairs but I cannot wake him. I sit with him and hold his hand and I speak to him, but he says nothing. He sleeps so soundly. Will you wake him for me, please. I will show you where he lies."

She led the way from the room, and the doctor followed her. Mathilda listened to their footsteps. Then she turned to Grant with that strange smile once more upon her lips.

"Annabelle and I do not speak," she explained. "We quarreled just after you went away. We have not spoken for so many years that I forget how long it is. I should like some one to tell her, though, that the man who lies upstairs is not William. I should like some one to make her realize that you are William, and that you have come back for *me*. Sit down, William. Presently, when the doctor has gone, I will build the fire and make you some tea."

Grant sat down and again he felt his hands trembling. The woman looked at him kindly.

"You have been gone a long time," she continued. "I should have known you anywhere, though. It is strange that Annabelle does not recognize you. Sometimes I think we have lived together so long here that she may have lost her memory. I am glad you fetched the doctor, William. Now Annabelle will know her mistake."

There was the sound of footsteps descending the stairs. The doctor entered. He took Grant by the arm and led him to one side.

"You were quite right," he said gravely. "The man upstairs is a poor traveling tinker who has been missing for over a week. I should think that he has been dead at least four days. One of us must stay here while the other goes to the police station."

Grant caught feverishly at his hat.

"I will go for the police," he said.

THE MONSTER-GOD OF MAMURTH

BY EDMOND HAMILTON

It was out of the desert night that he came to us, stumbling into our little circle of firelight and collapsing at once. Mitchell and I sprang to our feet with startled exclamations, for men who travel alone and on foot are a strange sight in the deserts of North Africa.

For the first few minutes that we worked over him, I thought he would die at once, but gradually we brought him back to consciousness. While Mitchell held a cup of water to his cracked lips, I looked him over and saw that he was too far gone to live much longer. His clothes were in rags, and his hands and knees literally flayed, from crawling over the sands, I judged.

So when he motioned feebly for more water, I gave it to him, knowing that in any case his time was short. Soon he could talk, in a dead, croaking voice.

"I'm alone," he told us, in answer to our first question; "no more out there to look for. What are you two—traders? I thought so. No, I'm an archæologist. A digger-up of the past." His voice broke for a moment. "It's not always good to dig up dead secrets. There are some things the past should be allowed to hide."

He caught the look that passed between Mitchell and me. "No, I'm not mad," he said. "You will hear, I'll tell you the whole thing. But listen to me, you two," and in his

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earnestness he raised himself to a sitting position, "keep out of Igidi Desert. Remember that I told you that. I had a warning, too, but I disregarded it. And I went into hell—into hell. But there, I will tell you from the beginning.

"My name—that doesn't matter now. I left Mogador more than a year ago, and came through the foothills of the Atlas ranges, striking out into the desert in hopes of finding some of the Carthaginian ruins the North African deserts are known to hold.

"I spent months in the search, traveling among the squalid Arab villages, now near an oasis and now far into the blank, untracked desert. And as I went farther into that savage country, I found more and more of the ruins I sought, crumbled remnants of temples and fortresses, relics, almost destroyed, of the age when Carthage meant empire and ruled all of North Africa from her walled city. And then, on the side of a massive block of stone, I found that which turned me toward Igidi.

"It was an inscription in the garbled Phœnician of the traders of Carthage, short enough that I remembered it and can repeat it word for word. It read, literally, as follows:

" 'Merchants, go not into the city of Mamurth, which lies beyond the mountain pass. For I, San Drabat of Carthage, entering the city with four companions in the month of Eschmoun, to trade, on the third night of our stay came priests and seized my fellows, I escaping by hiding. My companions they sacrificed to the evil god of the city, who has dwelt there from the beginning of time, and for whom the wise men of Mamurth have built a great temple the like of which is not on earth elsewhere, where the people of Mamurth worship their god. I escaped from the city and set this warning here that others may not turn their steps to Mamurth and to death.'

“Perhaps you can imagine the effect that inscription had on me. It was the last trace of a city unknown to the memory of men, a last floating spar of a civilization sunken in the sea of time. That there could have been such a city at all seemed to me quite probable. What do we know of Carthage even, but a few names? No city, no civilization was ever so completely blotted off the earth as Carthage, when Roman Scipio ground its temples and palaces into the very dust, and plowed up the ground with salt, and the eagles of conquering Rome flew across a desert where a metropolis had been.

“It was on the outskirts of one of those wretched little Arab villages that I had found the block, and its inscription, and I tried to find someone in the village to accompany me, but none would do so. I could plainly see the mountain pass, a mere crack between towering blue cliffs. In reality it was miles and miles away, but the deceptive optical qualities of the desert light made it seem very near. My maps placed that mountain range all right, as a lower branch of the Atlas, and the expanse behind the mountains was marked as ‘Igidi Desert,’ but that was all I got from them. All that I could reckon on as certain was that it was desert that lay on the other side of the pass, and I must carry enough supplies to meet it.

“But the Arabs knew more! Though I offered what must have been fabulous riches to those poor devils, not one would come with me when I let them know what place I was heading for. None had ever been there, they would not even ride far into the desert in that direction; but all had very definite ideas of the place beyond the mountains as a nest of devils, a haunt of evil Jinns.

“Knowing how firmly superstition is implanted in their kind, I tried no longer to persuade them, and started alone,

with two scrawny camels carrying my water and supplies. So for three days I forged across the desert under a broiling sun, and on the morning of the fourth I reached the pass.

“It was only a narrow crevice to begin with, and great boulders were strewn so thickly on its floor that it was a long, hard job getting through. And the cliffs on each side towered to such a height that the space between was a place of shadows and whispers and semi-darkness. It was late in the afternoon that I finally came through, and for a moment I stood motionless, for from that side of the pass the desert sloped down into a vast basin, and at the basin’s center, perhaps two miles from where I stood, gleamed the white ruins of Mamurth.

“I remember that I was very calm as I covered the two miles between myself and the ruins. I had taken the existence of the city as a fact, so much so that if the ruins had not been there I should have been vastly more surprised than at finding them.

“From the pass I had seen only a tangled mass of white fragments, but as I drew nearer some of these began to take outline as crumbling blocks, and walls, and columns. The sand had drifted, too, and the ruins were completely buried in some sections, while nearly all were half covered.

“And then it was that I made a curious discovery. I had stopped to examine the material of the ruins, a smooth, veinless stone, much like an artificial marble or a superfine concrete. And while I looked about me, intent on this, I noticed that on almost every shaft and block, on broken cornice and column, was carved the same symbol—if it was a symbol. It was a rough picture of a queer, outlandish creature, much like an octopus, with a round, almost shape-

less body, and several long tentacles or arms branching out from the body, not supple and boneless, like those of an octopus, but seemingly stiff and jointed, like a spider's legs. In fact, the thing might have been intended to represent a spider, I thought, though some of the details were wrong. I speculated for a moment on the profusion of these creatures carved on the ruins all around me, then gave it up as an enigma that was unsolvable.

"And the riddle of the city about me seemed unsolvable also. What could I find in this half-buried mass of stone fragments to throw light on the past? I could not even superficially explore the place, for the scantiness of my supplies and water would not permit a long stay. It was with a discouraged heart that I went back to the camels and, leading them to an open spot in the ruins, made my camp for the night. And when night had fallen, and I sat beside my little fire, the vast, brooding silence of this place of death was awful. There were no laughing human voices or cries of animals or even cries of bird or insect. Nothing but the darkness and silence that crowded around me, flowed down upon me, beat sullenly against the glowing spears of light my little fire threw out.

"As I sat there musing, I was startled by a slight sound behind me. I turned to see its cause, and then stiffened. As I have mentioned, the space directly around my camp was clear sand, smoothed level by the winds. Well, as I stared at that flat expanse of sand, a hole several inches across suddenly appeared in its surface, yards from where I stood, but clearly visible in the firelight:

"There was nothing whatever to be seen there, not even a shadow, but there it was, one moment the level surface of the sand, the next moment a hole appearing in it, accompanied by a soft, crunching sound. As I stood gazing at it

in wonder, that sound was repeated, and simultaneously another hole appeared in the sand's surface, only five or six feet nearer to me than the other.

"When I saw that, ice-tipped arrows of fear seemed to shoot through me, and then, yielding to a mad impulse, I snatched a blazing piece of fuel from the fire and hurled it, a comet of red flame, at the place where the holes had appeared. There was a slight sound of scurrying and shuffling, and I felt that whatever thing had made those marks had retreated, if a living thing had made them at all. What it had been, I could not imagine, for there had been absolutely nothing in sight, one track and then another appearing magically in the clear sand, if indeed they were really tracks at all.

"The mystery of the thing haunted me. Even in sleep I found no rest, for evil dreams seemed to flow into my brain from the dead city around me. All the dusty sins of ages past, in this forgotten place, seemed to be focused on me in the dreams I had. Strange shapes walked through them, unearthly as the spawn of a distant star, half-seen and vanishing again. It was little enough sleep I got that night, but when the sun finally came, with its first golden rays, my fears and oppressions dropped from me like a cloak. No wonder the early people were sun-worshippers!

"And with my renewed strength and courage, a new thought struck me. In the inscription I have quoted to you, that long-dead merchant-adventurer had mentioned the great temple of the city and dwelt on its grandeur. Where, then, were its ruins, I wondered. I decided that what time I had would be better spent in investigating the ruins of this temple, which should be prominent, if that ancient Carthaginian had been correct as to its size.

"I ascended a near-by hillock and looked about me in all directions, and though I could not perceive any vast pile of ruins that might have been the temple's, I did see for the first time, far away, two great figures of stone that stood out black against the rosy flame of the sunrise. It was a discovery that filled me with excitement, and I broke camp at once, starting in the direction of those two shapes.

"They were on the very edge of the farther side of the city, and it was noon before I finally stood before them. And now I saw clearly their nature. Two great, sitting figures, carved of black stone, all of fifty feet in height, and almost that far apart, both facing toward the city and toward me. They were of human shape and dressed in a queer, scaled armor, but the faces I cannot describe, for they were unhuman. The features were human, well-proportioned, even, but the face, the expression, suggested no kinship whatever with humanity as we know it. Were they carved from life? I wondered. If so, it must have been a strange sort of people who had lived in this city and set up these two statues.

"And now I tore my gaze away from them, and looked around. On each side of those shapes, the remains of what must once have been a mighty wall branched out, a long pile of crumbling ruins. But there had been no wall between the statues, that being evidently the gateway through the barrier. I wondered why the two guardians of the gate had survived, apparently entirely unharmed, while the wall and the city behind me had fallen into ruins. They were of a different material, I could see, but what was that material?

"And now I noticed for the first time the long avenue that began on the other side of the statues and stretched away into the desert for a half-mile or more. The sides of this avenue were two rows of smaller stone figures that ran in

parallel lines away from the two figures. So I started down that avenue, passing between the two great shapes that stood at its head. And as I went between them, I noticed for the first time the inscription graven on the inner side of each.

“On the pedestal of each figure, four or five feet from the ground, was a raised tablet of the same material, perhaps a yard square, and covered with strange symbols—characters, no doubt, of a lost language, undecipherable, at least to me. One symbol, though, that was especially prominent in the inscription, was not new to me. It was the carved picture of the spider, or octopus, which I have mentioned that I had found everywhere on the ruins of the city. And here it was scattered thickly among the symbols that made up the inscription. The tablet on the other statue was a replica of the first, and I could learn no more from it. So I started down the avenue, turning over in my mind the riddle of that omnipresent symbol, and then forgetting it, as I observed the things about me.

“That long street was like the avenue of sphinxes at Karnak, down which Pharaoh swung in his litter, borne to his temple on the necks of men. But the statues that made up its sides were not sphinx-shaped. They were carved in strange forms, shapes of animals unknown to us, as far removed from anything we can imagine as the beasts of another world. I cannot describe them, any more than you could describe a dragon to a man who had been blind all his life. Yet they were of evil, reptilian shapes; they tore at my nerves as I looked at them.

“Down between the two rows of them I went, until I came to the end of the avenue. Standing there between the last two figures, I could see nothing before me but the yellow sands of the desert, as far as the eye could reach. I was

puzzled. What had been the object of all the pains that had been taken, the wall, the two great statues, and this long avenue, if it but led into the desert?

“Gradually I began to see that there was something queer about the part of the desert that lay directly before me. It was *flat*. For an area, seemingly round in shape, that must have covered several acres, the surface of the desert seemed absolutely level. It was as though the sands within that great circle had been packed down with tremendous force, leaving not even the littlest ridge of dune on its surface. Beyond this flat area, and all around it, the desert was broken up by small hills and valleys, and traversed by whirling sand-clouds, but nothing stirred on the flat surface of the circle.

“Interested at once, I strode forward to the edge of the circle, only a few yards away. I had just reached that edge when an invisible hand seemed to strike me a great blow on the face and chest, knocking me backward in the sand.

“It was minutes before I advanced again, but I did advance, for all my curiosity was now aroused. I crawled toward the circle’s edge, holding my pistol before me, pushing slowly forward.

“When the automatic in my outstretched hand reached the line of the circle, it struck against something hard, and I could push it no farther. It was exactly as if it had struck against the side of a wall, but no wall or anything else was to be seen. Reaching out my hand, I touched the same hard barrier, and in a moment I was on my feet.

“For I knew now that it was solid matter I had run into, not force. When I thrust out my hands, the edge of the circle was as far as they would go, for there they met a smooth wall, totally invisible, yet at the same time quite material. And the phenomenon was one which even I could partly understand. Somehow, in the dead past, the scientists

of the city behind me, the 'wise men' mentioned in the inscription, had discovered the secret of making solid matter invisible, and had applied it to the work that I was now examining. Such a thing was far from impossible. Even our own scientists can make matter partly invisible, with the X-ray. Evidently these people had known the whole process, a secret that had been lost in the succeeding ages, like the secret of hard gold, and malleable glass, and others that we find mentioned in ancient writings. Yet I wondered how they had done this, so that, ages after those who had built the thing were wind-driven dust, it remained as invisible as ever.

"I stood back and threw pebbles into the air, toward the circle. No matter how high I threw them, when they reached the line of the circle's edge, they rebounded with a clinking sound, so I knew that the wall must tower to a great height above me. I was on fire to get inside the wall and examine the place from the inside, but how to do it? There must be an entrance, but where? And I suddenly remembered the two guardian statues at the head of the great avenue, with their carven tablets, and wondered what connection they had with this place.

"Suddenly the strangeness of the whole thing struck me like a blow. The great, unseen wall before me, the circle of sand, flat and unchanging, and myself standing there and wondering, wondering. A voice from out the dead city behind me seemed to sound in my heart, bidding me to turn and flee, to get away. I remembered the warning of the inscription, 'Go not to Mamurth.' And as I thought of the inscription, I had no doubt that this was the great temple described by San-Drabat. Surely he was right: the like of it was not on earth elsewhere.

"But I would not go, I could not go, until I had examined

the wall from the inside. Calmly reasoning the matter, I decided that the logical place for the gateway through the wall would be at the end of the avenue, so that those who came down the street could pass directly through the wall. And my reasoning was good, for it was at that spot that I found the entrance. An opening in the barrier, several yards wide, and running higher than I could reach, how high I had no means of telling.

“I felt my way through the gate, and stepped at once upon a floor of hard material, not as smooth as the wall’s surface, but equally invisible. Inside the entrance lay a corridor of equal width, leading into the center part of the circle, and I felt my way forward.

“I must have made a strange picture, had there been any there to observe it. For while I knew that all around me were the towering, invisible walls, and I knew not what else, yet all my eyes could see was the great flat circle of sand beneath me, carpeted with the afternoon sunshine. Only, I seemed to be walking a foot above the ground, in thin air. That was the thickness of the floor beneath me, and it was the weight of this great floor, I knew, that held the circle of sand under it forever flat and unchanging.

“I walked slowly down the passageway, with hands outstretched before me, and had gone but a short distance when I brought up against another smooth wall that lay directly across the corridor, seemingly making it a blind-alley. But I was not discouraged now, for I knew that there must be a door somewhere, and began to feel around me in search of it.

“I found the door. In groping about the sides of the corridor my hands encountered a smoothly rounded knob set in the wall, and as I laid my hand on this, the door opened.

There was a sighing, as of a little wind, and when I again felt my way forward, the wall that had lain across the passageway was gone, and I was free to go forward. But I dared not go through at once. I went back to the knob on the wall, and found that no amount of pressing or twisting of it would close the door that had opened. Some subtle mechanism within the knob had operated, that needed only a touch of the hand to work it, and the whole end of the corridor had moved out of the way, sliding up in grooves, I think, like a portcullis, though of this I am not sure.

“But the door was safely opened, and I passed through it. Moving about, like a blind man in a strange place, I found that I was in a vast inner court, the walls of which sloped away in a great curve. When I discovered this, I came back to the spot where the corridor opened into the court, and then walked straight out into the court itself.

“It was steps that I encountered: the first broad steps of what was evidently a staircase of titanic proportion. And I went up, slowly, carefully, feeling before me every foot of the way. It was only the feel of the staircase under me that gave reality to it, for as far as I could see, I was simply climbing up into empty space. It was weird beyond telling.

“Up and up I went, until I was all of a hundred feet above the ground, and then the staircase narrowed, the sides drew together. A few more steps, and I came out on a flat floor again, which, after some groping about, I found to be a broad landing, with high, railed edges. I crawled across this landing on hands and knees, and then struck against another wall, and in it, another door. I went through this, too, still crawling, and though everything about me was still invisible, I sensed that I was no longer in the open air, but in a great room.

“I stopped short, and then, as I crouched on the floor, I

felt a sudden prescience of evil, of some malignant, menacing entity that was native here. Nothing I could see, or hear, but strong upon my brain beat the thought of something infinitely ancient, infinitely evil, that was a part of this place. Was it a consciousness, I wonder, of the horror that had filled the place in ages long dead? Whatever caused it, I could go no farther in the face of the terror that possessed me, so I drew back and walked to the edge of the landing, leaning over its high, invisible railing and surveying the scene below.

“The setting sun hung like a great ball of red-hot iron in the western sky, and in its lurid rays the two great statues cast long shadows on the yellow sands. Not far away, my two camels, hobbled, moved restlessly about. To all appearances I was standing on thin air, a hundred feet or more above the ground, but in my mind’s eye I had a picture of the great courts and corridors below me, through which I had felt my way.

“Musing there in the red light, it was clear to me that this was the great temple of the city. What a sight it must have been, in the time of the city’s life! I could imagine the long procession of priests and people, in somber and gorgeous robes, coming out from the city, between the great statues and down the long avenue, dragging with them, perhaps, an unhappy prisoner to sacrifice to their god in this, his temple.

“The sun was now dipping beneath the horizon, and I turned to go, but before ever I moved I became rigid and my heart seemed to stand still. For on the farther edge of the clear stretch of sand that lay beneath the temple and the city, a hole suddenly appeared in the sand, springing into being on the desert’s face exactly like the one I had seen

at my camp-fire the night before. I watched, as fascinated as by the eyes of a snake. And before my eyes, another and another appeared, not in a straight line, but in a zigzag fashion. Two such holes would be punched down on one side, then two more on the other side, then one in the middle, making a series of tracks, perhaps two yards in width from side to side, and advancing straight toward the temple and myself. And I could see nothing!

“It was like—the comparison suddenly struck me—like the tracks a many-legged insect might make in the sand, only magnified to unheard-of proportions. And with that thought, the truth rushed on me, for I remembered the spider carved on the ruins and on the statues, and I knew now what it had signified to the dwellers in the city. What was it the inscription had said? ‘The evil god of the city, who has been there from the beginning of time.’ And as I saw those tracks advancing toward me, I knew that the city’s ancient evil god still dwelt there, and that I was in his temple, alone and unarmed.

“What strange creatures might there not have been in the dawn of time? And this one, this gigantic monster in a spider’s form—had not those who built the city found it here when they came, and, in awe, taken it as the city’s god, and built for it the mighty temple in which I now stood? And they, who had the wisdom and the art to make this vast fane invisible, not to be seen by human eyes, had they done the same to their god, and made of him almost a true god, invisible, powerful, undying? Undying! Almost it must have been, to survive the ages as it had done. Yet I knew that even some kinds of parrots live for centuries, and what could I know of this monstrous relic of dead ages? And when the city died and crumbled, and the victims were no longer brought to its lair in the temple, did it not live, as I

thought, by ranging the desert? No wonder the Arabs had feared the country in this direction. It would be death for anything that came even within view of such a horror, that could clutch and spring and chase, and yet remain always unseen. And was it death for me?

“Such were some of the thoughts that pounded through my brain, as I watched death approach, with those steadily advancing tracks in the sand. And now the paralysis of terror that had gripped me was broken, and I ran down the great staircase, and into the court. I could think of no place in that great hall where I might hide. Imagine hiding in a place where all is invisible! But I must go some place, and finally I dashed past the foot of the great staircase until I reached a wall directly under the landing on which I had stood, and against this I crouched, praying that the deepening shadows of dusk might hide me from the gaze of the creature whose lair this was.

“I knew instantly when the thing entered the gate through which I too had come. Pad, pad, pad—that was the soft, cushioned sound of its passage. I heard the feet stop for a moment by the opened door at the end of the corridor. Perhaps it was in surprise that the door was open, I thought, for how could I know how great or little intelligence lay in that unseen creature’s brain? Then pad, pad—across the court it came, and I heard the soft sound of its passing as it ascended the staircase. Had I not been afraid to breathe, I would have almost screamed with relief.

“Yet still fear held me, and I remained crouched against the wall while the thing went up the great stairs. Imagine that scene! All around me was absolutely nothing visible, nothing but the great flat circle of sand that lay a foot below me, yet I saw the place with my mind’s eye, and knew

of the walls and courts that lay about me, and the thing above me, in fear of which I was crouching there in the gathering darkness.

“The sound of feet above me had ceased, and I judged that the thing had gone into the great room above, which I had feared to enter. Now if ever was the time to make my escape in the darkness, so I rose, with infinite carefulness, and softly walked across the court to the door that led into the corridor. But when I had walked only half of the distance, as I thought, I crashed squarely into another invisible wall across my path, and fell backward, the metal handle of the sheath-knife at my belt striking the flooring with a loud clang. God help me, I had misjudged the position of the door, and had walked straight into the wall, instead!

“I lay there, motionless, with cold fear flooding every part of my being. Then, pad, pad—the soft steps of the thing across the landing, and then for a moment silence. Could it see me from the landing, I wondered. Could it? For a moment hope warmed me, as no sound came, but the next instant I knew that death had me by the throat, for—pad, pad—down the stairs it came.

“With that sound my last vestige of self-control fled and I scrambled to my feet and made another mad dash in the direction of the door. Crash!—into another wall I went, and rose to my feet trembling. There was no sound of footsteps now, and as quietly as I could, I walked into the great court still farther, as I thought, for my whole ideas of direction were hopelessly confused. God, what a weird game it was we played there on that darkened circle of sand!

“No sound whatever from the thing that hunted me, and my hope flickered up again. And with a dreadful irony, it was at that exact moment that I walked straight into the

thing. My outstretched hand touched and grasped what must have been one of its limbs, thick and cold and hairy, that was instantly torn from my grasp and then seized me again, while another and another clutched me also. The thing had stood quite still, leaving me to walk directly into its grasp—the drama of the spider and the fly!

“A moment only it held me, for that cold grasp filled me with such deep, shuddering abhorrence that I wrenched myself loose and fled madly across the court, stumbling again on the first step of the great staircase. I ran madly up those stairs, and even as I ran I heard the thing in pursuit, no soft steps now, but a rapid shuffle.

“Up I went, and across the landing, and grasped the edge of the railing, for I meant to throw myself down from there, to a clean death on the floor below. But under my hands the top of the railing moved, one of the great blocks that evidently made up its top was loosened and rocked toward me! In a flash I grasped the great block and staggered across the landing with it in my arms, to the head of the staircase. Two men could hardly have lifted it, I think, yet I did more, in a sudden access of mad strength; for as I heard that monster coming swiftly up the great stairs, I raised the block, invisible as ever, above my head, and sent it crashing down the staircase upon the place where I thought the thing was at that moment.

“For an instant after the crash there was silence, and then a low humming sound began, that waxed into a loud droning. And at the same time, at a spot half-way down the staircase where the block had crashed, a thin, purple liquid seemed to well out of the empty air, giving form to a few of the invisible steps as it flowed over them, and outlining too, the block I had thrown, and a great hairy limb that lay crushed beneath it, and from which the fluid that

was the monster's blood was oozing. I had not killed the thing, but had chained it down, as I thought, with the block that held it prisoner.

"There was a thrashing sound on the staircase, and the purple stream ran more freely, and by the outline of its splashes, I saw, dimly, the monstrous god that had been known in Mamurth in ages past. Like a giant spider, it was, with angled limbs that were yards long, and a hairy, repellent body. Even as I stood there, I wondered that the thing, invisible as it was, was yet visible by the lifeblood in it when that blood was spilled. Yet so it was, nor can I even suggest a reason. But one glimpse I got of its half-visible, purple-splashed outline, and then, hugging the farther side of the stairs, I descended. When I passed the thing, the intolerable odor of a crushed insect almost smothered me, and the monster itself made frantic efforts to loosen itself and spring at me. But it could not, and I got safely down, shuddering and hardly able to walk.

"Straight across the great court I went, and ran shakily through the corridor, and down the long avenue, and out between the two great statues. The moonlight shone on them, and the tablets of inscriptions stood out on the sides of the statues clearly, with their strange symbols and carved spider forms. But I knew now what their message was!

"It was well that my camels had wandered into the ruins, for such was the fear that struck me that I would never have returned for them had they lingered by the invisible wall. All that night I rode to the north, and when morning came I did not stop, but still pushed north. And as I went through the mountain pass, one camel stumbled and fell, and in falling burst open all my water supplies that were lashed on its back.

"No water at all was left, but I still held north, killing the

other camel by my constant speed, and then staggered on, on foot. On hands and knees I crawled forward, when my legs gave out, always north, away from that temple of evil and its evil god. And to-night, I had been crawling, how many miles I do not know, and I saw your fire. And that is all."

He lay back exhausted, and Mitchell and I looked at each other's faces in the firelight. Then, rising, Mitchell strode to the edge of our camp and looked for a long time at the moonlit desert, that lay toward the south. What his thoughts were, I do not know. I was nursing my own, as I watched the man that lay beside our fire.

It was early the next morning that he died, muttering about great walls around him. We wrapped his body securely, and bearing it with us held our way across the desert.

In Algiers we cabled to the friends whose address we found in his money belt, and arranged to ship the body to them, for such had been his only request. Later they wrote that he had been buried in the little churchyard of the New England village that had been his childhood home. I do not think that his sleep there will be troubled by dreams of that place of evil from which he fled. I pray that it will not.

Often and often have Mitchell and I discussed the thing, over lonely campfires and in the inns of seaport towns. Did he kill the invisible monster he spoke of, and is it lying now, a withered remnant, under the block on the great staircase? Or did it gnaw its way loose; does it still roam the desert and make its lair in the vast, ancient temple, as unseen as itself?

Or, different still, was the man simply crazed by the heat

and thirst of the desert, and his tale but the product of a maddened mind? I do not think that this is so. I think that he told truth, yet I do not know. Nor shall I ever know, for never, Mitchell and I have decided, shall we be the ones to venture into that place of hell on earth where that ancient god of evil may still be living, amid the invisible courts and towers, beyond the unseen wall.

HUGUENIN'S WIFE

BY M. P. SHIEL

"Ah, bitter-sweet."—KEATS.

HUGUENIN, my friend—the man of Art and thrills and impulses—the *boulevardier*, the *persifleur*—must, I concluded with certainty, be frenzied. So, at least, I reasoned when, after years of silence, I received from him this letter:—

“‘*Sdili*,’ my friend; that is the name by which they now call this ancient Delos. Wherefore has it been written, ‘so passeth the glory of the world.’

“Ah! but to me it is—as to *her* it was—still Delos, the Sacred Island, birthplace of Apollo, son of Leto! On the summit of Cynthus I look from my dwelling, and within the wild reach of the Cyclades perceive even yet the offerings of fruit arriving from Syria, from Sicily, from Egypt; I see the boats that bear the sacred envoys of Pan-Ionium to festival—I note the flutter of their holy robes—on the breeze once more floats to me their ‘Songs of Deliverance.’

“The island now belongs almost entirely to me. I am, too, almost its sole inhabitant. It is, you know, only four miles long, and half as broad, and I have bought up every available foot of its face. On the flat top of the granite Cynthus I live, and here, my friend, I shall die. Fetters more inexorable and horrible than any that the limbs of Prometheus ever felt rivet me to this crag.

“A friend! That is the thing after which my sick spirit

From “The Pale Ape and Other Happenings,” by M. P. Shiel. By arrangement with the author.

famishes. A *living man*: of the dead I have enough; of living monsters, ah, too much! and a servant or two, who seem persistently to shun me—this is all I possess of human fellowship. Yet I dare not implore you, my old companion, to come to the comfort of a sinking man in this place of desolation. . . .”

The epistle continued in this strain of mingled rhapsody and despair, containing, moreover, a long rigmarole on the Pythagorean dogma of the metempsychosis of the soul. Three times did the words “living monsters” occur.

From London to Delos is a journey; yet, conquered during a long vacation by an irresistible impulse, and the fond memories of other days, I actually found myself, on a starry night, disembarking on the sands that bound the once renowned harbor of the tiny island, and my arrival may be dated by the fact that it took place just two months before the extraordinary phenomena of which Delos was the scene during the night of 13th August, 1890. I first crossed the ring of flat land that almost encircles the islet, and then commenced the ascent of the central rise, the air slumbrous with the breath of rose, jasmine, almond, with the call of the cicada, the shine of the firefly. In forty minutes I had walked into a tangled garden, and placed my hand on the back of a tall man, habited in Attic garments, who was pacing there.

With a start he faced me.

“Oh,” he said, panting, and clapping his hands upon his chest, “I was awfully startled! My heart——”

It was Huguenin, and yet not he. The beard rolling over his snowy robes of wool was still ebon as ever; but the fluff of hair that floated with every zephyr over his face and

neck was a lifeless fluff of wool white. He stared at me with the lifeless and cavernous eyes of a man long dead.

When we entered the dwelling together, the mere appearance of the building was enough to convince me that in some mysterious way, to some morbid degree, the past had fettered and darkened the intellect of my friend. The mansion was of Hellenic type, but nothing less than mad in extent—a desert more than a habitation, a Greek house multiplied many times over into a congeries of Greek houses, like objects seen through angular glasses. It consisted of a single storey, though here and there on the flat roof there rose a second layer of apartments, attained by ladders. We walked through a door—opening inwards—into a passage, which took us to a courtyard, or *aule*, surrounded by Corinthian pillars, and having in the middle an altar of marble to *Zeus Herkeios*. Around this court were ranged chambers, *thalamoi*, hung with velvets; and the whole house—made up of a hundred and a hundred reproductions of such courtyards with their surrounding chambers—formed a trackless Sahara of halls through whose labyrinths the most crafty could not but fail to thread his way.

“This building,” Huguenin said to me, some days after my arrival, “this building—every stone, plank, drapery—was the creation of my wife’s wild fancy.”

I stared at him.

“You doubt that I have, or had, a wife? Come with me; you shall—see her face.”

He now led the way through the windowless house, lighted throughout the day and night by the reddish ray shed from many little censer lamps of terra-cotta filled with *nardinum*, an oil pressed from the blossom of the fragrant grass *nardus* of the Arabs.

I followed Huguenin through a good number of the

rooms, noticing that, as he moved slowly onward, he kept his body bent, seeming to seek for something; and this something I quickly found to be crimson thread, laid down on the floor to afford a clue for the foot through the mazes of the house. Suddenly he stopped before the door of one of the apartments called *amphithalamoi*, and, himself staying without, motioned me to enter.

Now I am hardly a man of what might be called a tremulous diathesis, yet it was not without a tremor that I looked round that room. At first I could discern nothing under the glimmer from a single *lampas* hanging in the middle, but presently a painting in oils, unframed, occupying nearly one side of the room, grew upon my sight: the painting of a woman: and my pulses underwent a strange agitation as I gazed on her face.

She stood robed in flowing ruby *peplos*, with her head thrown back, and one hand and arm pointing starkly outward and upward. The countenance was not merely Grecian—antique Grecian, as distinct from modern—but Grecian in a highly exaggerated and unlife-like degree. Was the woman, I asked myself, more lovely than ever mortal was before—or more loathsome? For Lamia stood there before me—“shape of gorgeous hue, vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue”—and a kind of surprise held me fixed as the image slowly took possession of my vision. The Gorgon’s head! whose hair was snakes; and as I thought of this I thought, too, of how from the guttering gore of the Gorgon’s head monsters rose; and then, with abhorrence, I remember Huguenin’s ravings as to “monsters.” I stepped nearer, in order to analyze the impression almost of dread wrought upon me, and I quickly found—or thought that I found—the key: it lay in the lady’s eyes: the very eyes of

the tigress: greedy glories of green glaring with radii of gold. I hurried from her.

"You have seen her?" Huguenin asked me with an eager leer of cunning.

"Yes, Huguenin," I said, "she is very beautiful."

"She painted it herself," he said in a whisper.

"Really!"

"She considered herself—she *was*—the greatest painter since Apelles."

"But now—where is she?"

He brought his lips to my ear.

"Dead. *You*, at any rate, would say so."

Well, to words so apparently senseless I would pay no attention then; but they recurred to me when I unearthed the circumstance that it was his way, at certain intervals, to make furtive visits to distant districts of the dwelling. Our bed-chambers being close together I could not fail, as time passed, to notice that he would rise in the dead of night, when he supposed me drowsing, and gathering together the fragments of our last repast, depart rapidly and soundlessly with them through the vastness of the house, led always in one particular direction by the thread of silk whose crimson lay over the floor.

I now set myself strenuously to the study of Huguenin. The name and nature of his physical sickness, at least, was clear—the affection to which physicians have given the name Cheyne Stoke's Respiration, compelling him to lie back at times in an agony of inhalation, and groan for air. The bones of his cheeks seemed to be near appearing through their sere trumpery of mummyskin; the *alæ* of his nose got no repose from their extravagance of expansion and retraction. But even this wreck of a body might, I believed, be rescued, were it not that to assuage the rage and feverish-

ness of such a *mind* the spheres contained no thyme. For one thing, a most queer belief in some unnamed fate hanging over the little land he lived on haunted him. Again and again he recalled to me all that in the far past had been written in regard to Delos: the strange notion contained both in the Homeric and the Alexandrian hymns to the Delian Apollo that Delos was *floating*; or that it was only held by chains; or that it had only been thrown up from the ocean as a temporary resting-place for Ortygia in her birth-giving; or that it might *sink* again before the spurning foot of the new-born god. He was never weary, through hours, of pursuing, as if in soliloquy, a species of sleepy exegesis of such scriptures as we read together. "Do you know," he said to me, "that the Greeks really believed the streams of Delos to rise and fall with the rise and fall of the Nile? Could anything point more strongly to the extraordinary character of this land, its far-extending volcanic constructions, occult geologic eccentricities?" Then he might recite the punning line of the very old Sibylline prophecy—

"And Samos shall be sand, and Delos (the far-seen) sink from sight;"

often, also, having recited it, he would strike from the repining chords of a lyre the theme of a threnody which, as he told me, his wife had composed to suit the line; and when to the funeral ruth of this tune—so wild with woe and whining, that I could never listen to it without a thrill—Huguenin added the sadness of his now so hollow voice, the intensity of effect upon me got to the intolerable degree, and I was glad of that pallid gloaming of the mansion, which partially hid my emotion.

"Remark, however," he said one day, "the meaning of the 'far-seen' as regards Delos: it means 'glorious' 'illustrious'

—far-seen to the spiritual rather than to the physical eye, for the island is not very elevated. The words ‘sink from sight’ must, therefore, be supposed to have the corresponding significance of an extinction of this glory. And now think whether or not this prophecy has not been already fulfilled, when I tell you that this sacrosanct land, which no dog’s foot was once permitted to touch, on which no man was permitted to be born or be buried, bears at this moment on its bosom a monster more loathsome than even a demon’s brain, I believe, ever conceived. A literal and physical fulfilment of the prophecy cannot, I consider, be always distant.”

But all this esotericism was not native to Huguenin: his mind, I was convinced, had been ploughed into by some very potent energy, before ever this growth had choked it. I enticed him, little by little, to speak of his wife.

She was, he told me, of a very antique Athenian family, which by constant effort had preserved its purity of blood; and it was while moving through Greece in a world-weary mood that, on reaching one night the village of Castri, there, on the site of the ancient Delphi, in the center of an angry throng of Greeks and Turks, who threatened to rend her to fragments, he first saw Andromeda his wife. “This incredible courage,” he said, “this vast originality was hers, to take upon herself the part of a modern Hypatia—to venture upon the task of the bringing back of the gods, in the midst of fanatics, at the latter end of a century like the present. The crowd from which I rescued her was howling round her in the vestibule of a just completed temple to Apollo, whose cult she was then and there attempting to set up.”

The love of the woman fastened upon her preserver with passionate fervor, and Huguenin, constrained by the vigor

of a will not to be resisted, came at her bidding to live in the gray building of her creation at Delos: in which solitude, under which shadow, the man and the woman faced each other. Ere many weeks it was revealed to the husband that he had married a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. And visions of what tinge! and dreams of what madness! He confessed to me that he was awed by her, and with his awe was blended a feeling which, if it was not fear, was akin to fear. That he loved her not at all he now knew, while the extravagance of her passion for him he grew to regard as gruesome. Yet his mind took on the hue of hers; he drank in her doctrines, followed her as a satellite. When for days she hid herself from him, he would wander desolate and full of search over his pathless home. Finding that she habitually yielded her body to the delights of certain seeds that grew on Delos, he found the courage to frown, but ended by himself becoming a bond-slave to the drowsy *ganja* of Hindustan. So, too, with the most strange fascination which she exercised over the animal world: he disliked it—dreaded it; regarded it as excessive and unnatural; but looked on only with the furtive eye of suspicion, and said nothing. When she walked she was accompanied by a magnetized *queue* of living things, felines in particular, and birds of large size; while dogs, on the contrary, shunned her, bristling. She had brought with her from the continent a throng of these followers, of which Huguenin had never beheld the half, since they were imprisoned in unknown nooks of the building; and anon she would vanish, to reappear with new companions. Her kindness to these creatures should, no doubt, have been sufficient to account for her power over them; but Huguenin's mind, already grown morbid, probed darkly after other explanation. The primary *motif* of this unquietness doubtless lay in his wife's fanaticism on the mat-

ter of the Pythagorean dogma of the transmigration of souls. On this theme Andromeda, it was clear, was outrageously deranged. She would stand, he declared, with her arm outstretched, her eyes wild-staring, her body rigid, and in a rapid recitative—like the rapt Pythoness—prophecy of the mutations prepared for the spirit of man, dwelling, above all, with contempt, on the paucity of animal forms in the world, and insisting that the spirit of an original man, disembodied, *should and must* reëmbody itself in a correspondingly original form. “And,” she would often add, “such forms exist, but the God, willing to save the race from frenzy, hides them from the eyes of common men.”

It was long, however, before I could get Huguenin to describe the final catastrophe of his wedded life. He related it in these words:—

“You now know that Andromeda was among the great painters—you have gloated upon her portrait of herself. Well, one day, after dilating, as was her wont, on the paucity of forms, she said, ‘But you, too, shall be of the initiated: come, you shall see *something*.’ She then went swiftly, beckoning, looking back often to smile on me a fond patronage, and I followed, till she stopped before a lately finished painting, pointing. I will not attempt—the attempt would be folly—to tell you what thing I saw before me on the canvas; nor can I explain in words the tempest of anger, of loathing and disgust, that stirred within me at the sight; but at that blasphemy of her fancy, I raised my hand to strike her head; and to this moment I know not if I struck her. My hand, it is true, felt the sensation of contact with something soft; but the blow, if blow there was, was hardly hard enough to harm a creature far feebler than man. Yet she fell; the film of death spread over her upbraiding eye; one last thing only she spoke, pointing to the uncleanness:

‘You may yet see it in the flesh’; and so, still pointing, sped away.

“I bore her body, embalmed in the Greek manner by an artist of Corinth, to one of the smaller apartments on the roof, and saw, as I moved to leave her in her gloom, the mortal smile on her lip within the open coffin. Two weeks later I went again to visit her. My friend, she had vanished—but for the bones; and from the coffin, above that skull, two eyes—living—the very eyes of Andromeda, but full of a newborn brightness—the eyes, too, of the horror she had painted, whose form I now made out in the darkness—looked out upon me. After I had slammed the door, I fainted on the stair.”

“The suggestion,” I said to him, “which you seem to wish to convey is that of a transition of forms, from man to animal; but, surely, the explanation that the monster, brought by your wife into the house, or born in it, imprisoned unawares by you with the dead, and maddened by famine, fed on the body, is, if not less horrible, yet less improbable.”

He looked doubtingly at me a moment, and then coldly said: “There was no monster imprisoned with the dead.”

But at least, I pleaded, he would see the necessity of flying from that place. He replied with the avowal that it was no longer doubtful to him, from the effect which any neglect to minister to the monster’s wants had upon his own health, that his life was bound up with the life of the being he stayed to maintain; that with the *second* murder which he should perpetrate—nay, with the attempt to perpetrate it, as by flight from the island—his life would be forfeited.

I accordingly formed the idea to effect the deliverance of my friend in spite of himself. Two months had now passed; the end of my visit was drawing near; yet his maladies of

brain and body were not relieved: and it pained me to think of leaving him once more alone, a prey to his manias.

That very day, then, while he slept his damp trances, I started the tramp on the track of the scarlet thread. So far it hauled out its length, and the halls through which it passed were of such uniformity, and its path so wound about, that I could not doubt but that the clue once snapped at any point, the voyage along its route could be accomplished only by the most improbable chance. I followed the thread to its end, where it stopped at the foot of a ladder-stair. This I ascended to a door at its top, a door with a hole in it close to the bottom, big enough to admit a plate; but, as I placed my foot on the uppermost step, a whine, complaining low, with a wild likeness to a woman's wail, sent me skipping, sick, whence I came.

But, some little distance from the steps, I broke the thread, and, gathering it up in my hand as I ran, again broke it near the region of the mansion which we occupied.

"In this way," I said, as I held the mass of thread to the flame of a lamp, "shall a man be saved."

I watched him afterwards through my half-shut eyes, as he departed, haggard and shuddering, hugging himself, on his nightly errand; and my heart galloped in an agony of disquiet while I awaited his coming again.

He was long. But when he came, he came swiftly, softly into my chamber and shook me by the shoulder. On his face was a look of unusual coolness, of dignity, of mystery.

"Wake up," he said: "I wish you to leave me to-night."

"But tell me——"

"I will take no refusal. Trust me this once, and go. There is a danger here. Two of the fisher-folk of the harbor will convey you over to Rhenea before the morning."

"But danger!" I said—"from what?"

"I cannot tell you: from the destiny, whatever it be, which awaits me. The thread on which my life depends is *snapped*."

"But suppose I tell you——"

"Ah! . . . you hear that?"

He held up his hand and hearkened: it was a sound of howling round the house.

"It is the wind rising," I muttered, starting up.

"But that which followed: didn't you *feel* it?"

I made him no answer.

He now clasped with his arms a marble column upon which he rested his forehead, while with one foot he kept on patting the floor; in which posture, quite demoralized and craven, he remained for some time, while the wind continued to rise; and suddenly he span towards me with a scream in a rapture of fear.

"Now at least—*you feel it!*"

I could not deny: it was as if the island had rocked a little to and fro on a pivot.

Now thoroughly demoralized myself, I now caught Huguenin's arm, and sought to draw him from the column which, muttering low, he was again hugging. But he would not stir; and I, determined in any event to stay by him, stood hearing the earthquake's increase while he seemed to take no further note of anything, motionless but for the motion of his foot. In this way an hour went by: at the end of which interval the rocking had become strong, rapid and continuous.

There came a second, when captured by a new panic, I sprang to shake him, understanding that some lamp had been dashed down in that passion of the mansion's agitation.

"Why, man!" I cried, "have you parted with every sense? Can't you feel that the house is in flames?"

On this his eyes, which had become dazed and dull, blazed up with a new lunacy.

"Then," he suddenly shouted in a passion of loudness, "I say she *shall* be saved!"

Before I could lay hold of the now foaming maniac, he had dashed past me into a passage. I followed in hot pursuit through rooms and corridors that seemed to reel in a furious dream of heat and reek, hoping that he, weak of lung, would fall choked and exhausted. But some energy seemed to lend him strength—he rushed onward like the hurricane; some mysterious feeling seemed to lead him—never once did he hesitate.

And after all the long chase, which ever swayed at the rocking of the land, but never stopped, I saw that the intuitions of insanity had not failed the madman—he got to the goal he gasped after. I saw him fly up the ladder, whose foot was in a pool of fire, saw him fly to the door of the tomb of Andromeda, already flagrant, and drag it open. But as he dragged it, there broke out of the room—above the roaring of the conflagration, and of the gale, and of that thousandfold growling of the ground—a shriek, shrill yet ugly with gutturalness, which congealed me in that heat; and immediately I saw proceeding from the interior a creature whose obscenity and vileness language has no vocabulary to describe. For if I say that it was a cat—of great size—its eyes glaring like a conflagration—its fat frame wrapped in a mass of feathers, gray, vermilion-tipped—with a similitude of miniature wings on it—with a width of tail vast, down-turned, like the tails of birds-of-paradise—how by such words can I express half of all the retching of my nausea, the shame, the hate . . . The fire had ere this

reached the thing, and on fire I could spy it fly rather than spring at Huguenin's heart; then its fangs like grapnels buried in his breast, the gluttony of its gums that met on his gullet, I saw through a fog of feathers raining, he tottering, tearing at the feathery horror, as backward he toppled from the landing over the spot where a moment before the ladder had stood.

By blessed luck, as I rapidly ran thence, I stumbled upon some exit, to find outside the night quite cloudless, star-lit, though a whirl of all the winds of the world were whistling within the vault of sky that night. In descending, too, to the level, I remarked a rather scorched aspect of some of the leafage, and at one spot saw a series of conical openings in the ground with greenish scoriæ round their edges. Lower still, I stood on a bluff, and looking over the sea, witnessed a sight sublime to wildness: for the sea, too hurried to show billow, to show ripple, and lit up deep within its depth with a sheen of phosphorescence, was speeding as if after the steeds of Diomedes with the fleetest meaning towards Delos. Delos, indeed, seemed to "float," to be swimming like a little doomed fowl counter to the swoop of the boundless. With the morning's light I passed away from this mysterious shrine of Grecian piety, the final sight that greeted my gaze being the still rising reek of Huguenin's grave.

THE COCONUT PEARL

BY BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

THERE are places in the far, farthest East where time stands still. Take ship to-morrow and sail till you have passed all Europe and all Asia, and the Red Sea is a memory of long ago, and you have had time to forget Singapore. And take ship again, and again. And then you will find the Isles of Spice, forgotten, lovely, at peace. White people live there; it is always summer for them, and there are always flowers, and at dawn the spice forests smell like trees in the Garden guarded by the angel with the sword.

When you would travel, brown canoes with plaited roofs set over, or little horses in toy carriages, take you on your way. Of an evening, one sits on the stone or marble stoop of the house, talking, smoking, sucking strange fruits, unknown elsewhere; watching the fireflies prick the dusk with emerald sparks; seeing, across a strait, a great volcano rear its sinister head, and wondering if the red cloud that hovers on the cone means anything, or, as it has meant for countless generations, nothing at all . . .

I will not tell you from what days of leaden sorrow, through what gateways of despair, I drifted to the refuge of these Isles of Spice. I know you do not want to hear about that; you have had your own sorrows and only wish to forget about them. You want to know how I came to have the money and the time. The money was one hundred and sixty pounds, ticket from Tilbury Docks. I got it, and a

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good bit more, by disposing of my life insurance, which had suddenly become valueless to me. As for time, I obtained that by robbing and murdering my future as lecturer in a provincial university. The crime did not lie upon my conscience; I did not mean to have a future. And there you get it.

It seems to me that a man could let himself out of life as pleasantly as ever ancient Roman did in a perfumed bath, by drifting to some dreamy spot at the world's end, to watch the last drops of his golden life-fluid drip away, and there, with one of the easy poisons of the far Orient, when all was done——

Say no

To the pulse's magnificent come and go.

Hence—the medieval town of Ternate on one of those equatorial nights that are alike almost the whole year round; the government “*pasanggrahan*” or rest-house, with nobody resting in it but myself; the smell of spice and orange flowers about a square pillared stoop, and I, Robert Barwell Knight, formerly of Warkham University, lying on a cane lounge smoking a Sumatra cigar and listening to the riot of an Arab wedding that was passing. Not unhappy, for the first time in many months. Not happy either; desirous simply of being let alone.

So that, when there sounded outside the front of the *pasanggrahan*, the rattle of a pony cart and the shouts of a Malay driver; when the native keeper of the house came slip-slopping sulkily from his room to swing a lantern and put out the stars—I, knowing this portended the arrival of another guest, laid down my cigar to curse with the ease and fluency the situation demanded.

The caretaker was bargaining with the driver of the cart; he had not brought back the lamp, and I could now see a

tall pale figure standing, not too steadily, against the purple of the sky.

"You got any Scotch whisky, old feller?" it said.

"I think so," I answered.

"May I 'quest you—all due deference—trot it out? When I get like this—'scuse my mentioning 'bjectionable susheck—the native nectar an' ambrosia doesn't mix. Head nex' day. Good Scotch, I go to sleep; wake up like young Greece god. You like to see me like young Greece god to-morrow?"

"Assuredly," I answered him, and handed over the bottle I had opened a day or two before. There was not much out of it. I have my failings; but drink is not one of them. He took it with a bow that nearly proved his undoing.

In the dusk he tottered off to a room at the other end of the stoop. "Know my way," he proclaimed; and I heard him drop on the bed.

Next morning the "Greek god," who turned out in daylight to be a tall, terribly thin, pale-blue-eyed young Briton in a starched white suit, was up early, taking his breakfast in a way that suggested long practise in the losing game I had seen him play the night before. He did not wait for me to say anything about myself; he simply turned on the tap of his own affairs and aspirations and let it flow.

"I'm a traveler, a beastly bagman," was his first remark. "Only Briton who ever comes round this beastly place. I travel for that Australian stuff, Young's Eucalyptus Cure. The Malays lap it up like milk. They simply revel in drugs. I make a bit in salary and commish, and I wish I was dead. Of course you'd like to know why."

"I think you overestimate—"

"It's because I'm a come-down. I broke the bank at Monty six years ago. And it broke me. Always had to econo-

mize at home, clergyman's son and all that—you don't believe a word I'm saying, but nevertheless—"

"I assure you it's a matter of—"

"Nevertheless I'm telling the beastly truth. After a year of spending like billy-o, I couldn't settle down; they sent me to Australia, way they always do—you know—"

"I haven't any pers—"

"And I got to sleeping in the Domain with a newspaper over me—government rations and all that. Found my people were related to the Cure—my name's Young, Bobby Young. Got myself put on the road for the firm, and it put me in the pot. I drink like a fish; I'm a beastly warning and example. I'll go on drinking like a fish till I find something else to live for. And that year after I broke the bank had spoiled me out-and-out for anything that hasn't got money in it; lots and lots. And I'm as likely to find lots and lots as I am to fly over the moon. So there you have me." He looked at me with comical blue eyes from which not yet all the boyishness had fled.

I said nothing.

Young, lighting a cigaret, went on:

"This is a queer sort of a hole. Used to be as rich as a bunch of war profiteers. Bird of paradise trade gone to beastly pot; all the old Chinks and square-heads who used to live in marble palaces and eat off silver and gold plate are as poor as Job's turkey. If I depended on them for trade, I'd go hungry. And yet some of the old folk have things salted away you wouldn't believe. There's an old witch over on Klabok who lives in a palace and's said to own the biggest pearl in the world. And she's so poor, or pretends she is, that she gets all her food out of the native *pasar*. What do you think of that?"

"I haven't seen a *pasar*."

"Well, you should have. Shows you how people live. That old woman on Klabok can get five courses for an English penny over on her island if she shops well. Live on half nothing at all. And she with a pearl as big as a walnut. And a daughter as pretty as the pearl. Ratty, if you ask me."

"I don't know that I did." Conscience impelled me to add hastily, "But it's all very—"

"'F course it is. Let's get a prau and go over and see them."

"My dear sir," I said, sitting upright, "do I look like the sort of person who would—"

"You look about forty."

"Well, I'm not," I snapped, with more heat than I should have thought myself capable of. "I'm exactly thirty-three."

"Then," said Bobby Young triumphantly, "it stands to reason you should come."

The logic was crazy, but somehow it convinced. I began to understand how a solid business firm had trusted Bobby with its traveling. One could imagine him triumphantly selling useless truck to keen Chinese: to Malays who know that a cent, worth one-fifth of a penny, has two sides, and that you had better look at both before parting with it.

So noon found me creeping across a flat pale plain of sea, rained on upon all sides by the crystal fires of equatorial midday, in an open, creaking prau. Bobby Young, a little forward, lay on the ribs of the craft as if they had been down, smoking a fierce cigar and talking endlessly. In the ceaseless showering of his talk, pearls were the principal element; if I had been interested in the subject, I should have learned a good deal.

"More things in the sea than have ever come out of it," he was saying when I woke up from a half-dream in which I had been watching vaguely the perfect cone of Klabok turn

from palest speedwell color to sapphire, to violet, to near bright purple and green. "Anyone who's knocked about the pearling islands knows a thing or two that nobody'd believe. New fish the divers come across and don't think it worth mentioning; dead ships they find, and gut 'em, and hold their tongues. Any diver who'd been long at work could make your hair stand on end with his yarns. One chap I know went crazy, beastly crazy, because he found his mate with one foot hanging out from the end of a giant clam—*Tridacna Gigas*, you know."

"No."

"And his head poppin' out of the other end. I could tell you better things than that."

I said nothing.

"But as to the pearl being the size of a walnut," he went on, leaping as lightly off one subject and on to another as a goat jumps from rock to rock, "I don't believe it till I see it, even if the old witch's husband was Frank Watts."

That waked me up. A man who has been a teacher will react to Frank Watts' name as inevitably as a terrier reacts to "Rats!" "Good Lord," I said with some sharpness, "you don't know what you're talking about!"

"Don't I? I did enough beastly study at one time to know, if I don't. I know all about Frank Watts—Doctor Frank Watts, biologist and the rest of it. I know about his deep sea discoveries and his palling up with the Prince of Monaco and coming out here and trying experiments with Malay divers who can beat white men hollow, to see how much a man could stand in the way of depth. And getting tied up with a Dutch girl, and marrying her, and getting knifed by a Malay whose brother had winked out with diver's paralysis on account of Frank Watts' experiments. They buried him in the sea—it's in the schoolbooks."

“Yes; I—”

“But all the same, if she had had a pearl that size, she’d have gone home to Holland with it, she and the kid. You can’t tell me. My Lord, if I had a pearl the size of a pea—just one pea—you wouldn’t see me for the spray the screws of the steamer would be kicking up, with me on board twisting the tails of the engineers. There’s the old girl’s palace; what do you think of it?”

I looked with eyes of interest on a pale, shadowed building that was suddenly rising up out of the water—as you remember the palaces of Venice seem to spring.

It had thick pillars of white stone, many but not tall; there was a long terrace of steps in front of it, with little statues standing on a balustrade. In the middle the steps narrowed to a single flight, which ran right down into green sea-water, with shells and weeds clinging to the lowest slabs of marble. On each side of the house, clusters of hundred-foot-high bamboo cast penciled shade; there were coral trees and flamboyants leaning over the sea, dropping their red flowers into the water, so that it seemed full of little flames. Some oranges, fallen from drooping boughs, were bouncing slowly down from step to step as our prau, sail lowered, drifted to the stairs. More turned and sank and rose again in the water by the bow of the boat; there were orange-flowers among them, too. Through fruit and flower, we pressed our way to the landing slab, and Bobby Young leaped out.

I suppose I must have been hypnotized; I followed him up the stairs, into the swaying shadows of the flamboyant and bamboo, across the space of the open stoop—marble, like all the rest—into an inner hall with at least a dozen large doors giving on it. There were two ladies there, lying on

lounges. They got up as we crossed the stoop, and the older came forward to meet us.

She was a woman of many years; that I saw at a glance. She wore the usual Dutch-Indian negligée of dressing-jacket and sarong; her massive gray hair was coiled tight on the top of her head. She was thinnish, and walked slowly. There was, however, nothing old or feeble in the angry brazen eye with which she met us; nothing indeterminate in the gesture which pointed, sharply and commandingly down to the prau below. She said a few words of guttural Dutch to Young. He, quite unabashed, answered her in the same tongue and I gathered that I was the subject of discourse.

"I'm telling her," explained Young, with a half concealed wink, "that you're all sorts of a learned old pot and have come out here to study because you heard of Frank Watts having been about these parts years ago. Try and look as like it as you can."

"Well, as it happens," I said with some heat, "I do hold a London degree, and biology was my special subject, so Frank Watts' deep sea work does interest me extremely. That is, it would if anything did."

I don't know what he was going to say, for the old woman—he had not been far out when he described her as an old witch—turned to me with some dignity and addressed me in excellent English.

"If you are a scholar, sir," she said, "you are very welcome here for my late husband's sake, and I hope you will stay with us a little."

A good deal to my own astonishment, I heard myself replying: "You are extremely kind and I should like nothing better."

"I do not want your friend," she added calmly:

Young had sidled out of earshot and was, as I saw with

the corner of an eye, trying to flirt with the girl. I saw, also with the corner of an eye, that she was taller than her mother, slim like a young betel-palm, and had a mass of exquisite pale hair falling all over her shoulders.

It came very hard with me at that minute to refrain from saying that Young was no friend of mine. But I felt that it would hardly be playing the game.

"He has many business engagements," was what I finally got out.

"I know him by the gossip of Ternate," she said. "Let him go look about that business. Perhaps you will send for your clothes, *née*? And I and my daughter Marina, we shall make you welcome, if you will have a week or two here."

I don't know how she managed to get rid of Bobby Young; she had him trotting down the slippery marble stairs again in about two minutes, but I heard nothing of what she said. I ran after him to speak out of earshot.

"I'm sorry," was all I could find to say. "I hope she hasn't been rude."

"Pretty beastly," was his answer, given with a laugh. "I don't mind her, though; I'll call again with my samples and see if I can't sell her a dozen Cure. You're in luck's way. I say—I say, didn't you tell me on the way out you were married?"

"I—what has that——"

"Plenty. I remember now. You did mention your wife—about boats—I asked you if you'd ever owned a boat, and could you steer, because the blighter who had the prau was—and you said you'd had one, but never steered it; your wife always did. She alive?"

"Is that any business——"

"Yes, every business, now I've seen that girl. Why, she's

a beauty; and she owns, or will own, the biggest pearl in the East if the story's true. Is your wife alive?"

One could not snub him; as well try to strike a jet of water.

"Yes," I answered, and turned my back.

"Good-o!" he chimed.

I did not see him embark and glide away again in the prau; I was too bitterly occupied with the pain his words had waked—the pain that all these months had done little to soothe. For I had had a wife and a friend, both loved. And I had them no longer, though she was not dead.

She was married—married again. But I have said that I will not tell the story.

It was like a dream to me that night, to find myself sitting at meat on the white terrace, underneath the stars, with the old woman and her daughter—friendly, at home with these strangers as I had seldom been with any in the English places. We fitted one another; we suited. Frank Watts' queer old widow questioned me with pathetic interest regarding my knowledge of her husband and his work. When I told her that I had written a good deal about him at one time and another, and once delivered a lecture on famous men of science that included him, the tears came into her eyes.

"Mister, you do not know how much it is to me that I hear this," she said. "I have brought up Marina English; she has read the English books; one day she will take place in the English society. Marina will be rich, but I am hoping they will think of her as Frank Watts' daughter more than for riches."

Riches! I looked about the ruined palace; I noted the one small servitor waiting at table, the food from the Malay market—no mistaking those chunks of meaty fish

in soy, that bean and pepper soup, those fritters of various kinds; good, but seldom used in European kitchens.

I looked with newly observant eyes at the dress of the two women—Mrs. Watts in the poorest of cotton, the girl in silk, but silk of the kind worn by natives; slippers on both, no stockings on the lean brown ankles of the mother or the white ones of the girl. Why, it was poverty, grinding poverty, that spoke here; they would pay for my visit with weeks of bitter saving—unless I could find means to make them take money from me.

“Dead men’s shoes need long waiting for,” was what I produced in answer. It was a bait; it caught.

“There are no dead men’s shoes for Marina, unless mine,” said the old mother. (How old was she? well on towards seventy anyhow, and the girl was scarce twenty; Frank Watts, always eccentric, must have wedded that pitiful thing, a Dutch old maid. No wonder she was grateful, worshiped his memory!) “There is this island, and the palace, which was of a sultan formerly, and there is the pearl of her father.”

Marina had never spoken a word up to this. She had sat silent at the far side of the huge table, eating little, staring in a well-mannered covert way at myself. I began to remember that I had been thought a good-looking fellow in days when such things mattered; I found myself twisting my eye towards the useless, tarnished mirror that winked from one of the pillars. It was while I was doing so that Marina spoke; I looked back hastily. She was leaning forward, her white-gold hair twisted into a heavy rope for coolness, hanging down one shoulder and over her breast; her curious, green-sea eyes staring harder than ever.

"Mother, have you thought?" she said in a breathless kind of voice.

"I do not think, Marina, I know," answered the old woman.

"It is safe?"

"Look for yourself."

"I have been looking, mother."

"What does your spirit tell you, daughter? Believe your spirit always; she is sent by God to protect you."

"She says——" The girl leaned forward; her eyes, color of the deep sea-water below the marble stairs, seemed to flow over mine. "She says—yes, trust."

"You know they call me a witch?" said the old woman, with an abrupt change.

"I—I have heard——"

"But they are right. If I were not a witch—if the Malays had not known it—Marina and I, we should be found floating below the stairs, very long ago, with the cut of a kris in our throats. They are afraid. Now I will show you how I am a witch. Give me your hand. Do not be frightened. I will not make any harm to you."

I gave my hand, wondering what was to come next; laughing, almost, at the absurd solemnity of it. There was silence for a minute, and then the old woman spoke in a whisper:

"There are many poisons here in Insulinde, but there is none for you."

I snatched my hand away. "Thought-reading," I had almost said; but that would have been to admit.

"Yes," she answered me as if I had spoken, "yet how is it that I know that what you are thinking of will not be? I tell you, I am a witch. I can call spirits, I can see through mists which cover souls."

One remembers the time when such claims were not taken seriously. Nowadays we know more.

"I'm prepared to believe you have unusual powers," I answered her. "I understand the influence you must have over the Malays. But why do you think they would have murdered you?"

"A Malay would murder his mother and father and all his relations for a pearl as large as the top of Marina's smallest finger," she answered.

"And your pearl is larger than that?" Curious, the warm interest that was running through my veins, stirring me like wine. Or perhaps not curious, in view of the effect that great gems have on all who come within their—mostly malign—influence.

Watts' widow laughed. "It is the largest pearl in the world," she said. "In the world! And only my man in all the world could have got it." There, suddenly, she pulled herself up. "Mister, you must be tired," she said. "I will show you your room." She led me into the central hall, opened a door and handed me a candle. "Sleep well," she said.

The moon shone in through two huge windows, bats, big as rabbits, whirled and squeaked outside. Down below, I could hear the faint sea lapping on the last of the marble steps, could even catch the faint sound of an orange from the trees on the terrace bumping slowly down from stair to stair. I sat on the edge of the gigantic Dutch bed and wondered how I came to be there; wondered if I should not wake up in the *pasanggrahan* of Ternate, and find it all a dream. Then, though it was no more than nine o'clock and I had been sure I could not sleep before the small hours, I went to bed, and knew nothing more until the parrots began to

shriek from the bamboos, and the little Malay boy stole in to bring my morning coffee.

If the evening had been dreamlike, the days that followed were still more so. The aching of my mind was strangely soothed. It was as if the melted-gold heat of the islands, felt until now by the body alone, were creeping softly, kindly, into the frozen regions of the soul, thawing away pain of cold, loosening an ice-bound heart. There are those to whom the tropic suns bring life; they only will understand.

Likeness of mind, unexpected yet strong, drew me to the old woman; through her, to the daughter. Emma Watts, with her queer interest in matters occult, her wide reading, fostered by the years of loneliness on Klabok, her simple, genuine reverence for scholars and learning, suited me well, and it was clear I suited her. "I should have liked her for a relation," I thought. Then, with an instinct that—for the moment—was blind, I turned to the slim figure of Marina. She was like a daffodil that day, I thought—in the poorest, prettiest of green muslins from the "*pasar*," with her ash-gold head above. I wondered how it was . . .

"Mister," said the old woman, without lifting her eyes from her knitting, "you are the first visitor Marina and me have had for six years. Since Marina was thirteen."

Marina, her light feet crossed against one another, seemed not to listen as she leaned against a pillar and played, tossing up and down a ball she had made of rich hibiscus, passion-red.

"Mister," went on Emma Watts, the needles clicking ceaselessly, "when my man died, he left Marina and me his name; that was truly making us rich. But he has not left other riches for us. A little—just that one thousand English pounds that was his insurance. Mister, it is twenty years

next year that I have been spending the one thousand, and she is almost done. In this old palace of the sultan's which my man bought, we have lived with that money; and Marina has read the books of her father, and she has had food enough for a girl—she is not thin, mister.”

Suddenly, pitifully, I understood how it was—must be—that old Emma Watts had escaped the Dutchwoman's common fate of middle-aged fatness. “Food enough for a girl . . .” I was glad I had won out in my determined fight to pay my board.

“I have thought, mister,” went on old Emma, “that when she was the right age to marry, we should go together to my man's England, or maybe to my Holland, and there, in London or Amsterdam, I should sell that”—her voice lowered; she looked around cautiously—“that pearl.” The needles clicked wildly for a moment or two. “I have guarded her—all the same, the two; two pearls, mister.”

“You are right,” I told her. “She is a pearl.” And saying it, something seemed to break inside me, and I knew the long frost was gone, and warm springs welling up once more.

The old woman continued: “Here in this Insulinde was the best place for my two pearls, mister. You do not think it? Well, it is so. On my island, in my old broken palace, the two pearls were safe. There is nothing that the Malays fear so much as sorcery, and for them I am a sorceress. I have knowledge; I am not the wife of a man of science for nothing. Perhaps I have helped my sorcery.” She looked at me with candid, faded brown eyes. “Mister,” she whispered, “I was justified—for anything I did.”

“I am not one to judge you,” was my answer.

Emma Watts shook her gray-plaited head as a bird shakes water from its plumage. “There!” she said. “Past is past,

mister. My pearls are saved. Now I have a thing to ask you, because you are an honest man, and I have not known three honest men in all my life. Marina must marry. But, mister, the marriage portion! That she must have, if she marry a Hollander; if she marries an Englishman, too, it is well to have money. And the money to take her home and place her among the people of her father—or my Amsterdam—away from all this half-caste sort of the islands—it is much money.”

She paused a minute. In the interval I heard Marina, at the other end of the stoop, singing to herself as she tossed her scarlet ball; I heard the green and ivory little waves lap-lapping coolly on the lowest steps of the marble; I heard, once more, an orange, dead ripe, drop from the trees and go bumping slowly down stair after stair.

“Mister,” said old Emma, dropping her knitting and staring me in the face, “mister, I cannot sell my pearl.”

“Why not, *Mevrouw*?”

She looked at me. Oh, the age, the cunning, the deep cruel knowledge and experience that spoke in her eyes!

“You know nothing of pearls and what they do,” was her answer. “Lies cling about great pearls, mister, and cruelty and death. But above all lies. No one who touches them goes without—how do you say it? Scathe.”

“A literary word,” I answered, “but it will pass.” Something seemed to touch me, not pleasantly, in her words; was I quite unscathed?

“I took—the pearl,” she said, lowering her voice as she always lowered it at that word, “once, in need, to an old, very old Chinese merchant of Ternate. We locked the doors; it was late at night and no one saw. One hour after I came away, mister, he was dead.”

“Murdered? With the pearl?”

“Murdered, but without the pearl, mister. I had not sold it. Why? He would give nothing for it—nothing but a few poor hundred guilders. ‘It is too risk,’ he said. ‘I shall not make my money.’ And I took it back; but for the very shadow of that pearl that passed through his godown, that no one had seen, he died.”

“Why would he not——”

“Wait. There was a Portuguese merchant once who passed through, traveling to Macao. I made him swear secrecy on his crucifix. Then I showed him the pearl. ‘Mother of God!’ he said. But he too, he would cheat me; he pretended that he could give only a little. So he went away.”

“I am deeply interested, *Mevrouze*,” I said. “But I cannot quite see what it is you want me to do.”

She looked at me curiously.

“Last week,” she said, “you meant to die. So it shall not shock you when I say that I am to die, without meaning it. No, listen; Marina is gone—always at this time of day she goes to bathe in the shallow water under the stairs. She cannot hear. I have had a bad trouble in my heart; now it gets worse, and the time is short. Last night I almost died—that is not the first time, and I think the next will be the last. Mister, if my Marina is a pearl, you are a diamond; I can read the hearts; I know you are an honest man, and that is as rare as the diamond. You have no woman you love, or you would not dream of the poisons of Insulinde as you did—last week. Now when I am gone, if you will guard her home to England, that’s well; if you will love her, that is better. I would leave you my two pearls.”

She stood erect, a certain dignity in her ravaged, time-worn figure and shabby clothing. I have said that I liked Frank Watts’ widow. In that moment I looked back through twenty years and realized how—even at forty-odd, even

without beauty, money or position—she had attracted that simple, honest gentleman.

I thought of the picture of Marina, with her green-sea eyes and sea-nymph slenderness, leaning against the pillar, grasping in her cold hands those passionate hibiscus flowers. Dead things waked in my heart; the ice was gone, the springs were flowing.

“If she will have me,” I said, and stopped.

Mevrouse nodded. “Now,” she said, speaking low again, “you shall see the lesser pearl.”

She disappeared. It was some time before she called me into an inner room, lighted only by a large hanging oil lamp. She shut all doors, and there, in the streaming heat of the enclosed space, she unrolled a long silk scarf that covered an inner parcel, again of silk—another and another.

“They have told you,” she said, “that it is as big as a walnut of England, or a chestnut of these Malay markets. Do you believe them? There is no one living has seen it to tell the truth.”

“Well, if you ask me,” I said, “I imagine it has been a little exaggerated. Pearls the size of chestnuts, so far as I know, don’t exist.”

“You are right, mister; it is not the size of a chestnut,” she said, and as she unrolled the last of the blue silken wrappings, making a nest of it, she laid in the center, like an egg, the pearl.

Pearl! I did not know what the thing was on which, half stunned, I looked. It had the shape and luster of the finest gem that ever centered a queen’s coronation necklace; it shone beneath the hanging lamp, fair as a fallen moon—but——

“*Mevrouse*,” I gasped, “why—it is as big as a coconut!”

In truth it was. Not as large as the green nuts in the

husk that one sees in tropic forests; as large, perhaps, as the smaller, rough brown spheres that show in grocers' windows at home. I could not believe what I saw. I lifted the gem, felt it. It was smooth as the fine silk on which it lay, and its weight was like a ball of stone. I knew that such pearls did not exist, could not exist, in view of the size and capacity of any known pearl-bearing shell, but the thing nevertheless was there and was real. The idea of any imitation never crossed my mind; it would have been as motiveless as impossible.

The thought that came to me I spoke out at once, carelessly. "I wish Bobby Young were here."

Her eyes lightened. "I do not wish," she said. "My guardian spirit tells me about him as about you. He is not bad, but weak, blown about as a moth, and that is worse. He is like all the others who want my two pearls; one to spend, and one to fling in the mud. Not you."

"*Mevrouw*," I said, "I meant no harm—but Young does know a great deal about pearls, and I know nothing; he might be able to value it for you—suggest a market."

"I will not have him," she said, wrapping the pearl slowly, lingeringly, as nineteen years before she might have wrapped that other pearl, the fairer of the two. "My spirit has told me things . . . Mister, I am not easy when Marina is out alone bathing; let us return."

She disappeared again, and I waited; I knew I had not heard all about the pearl.

In a minute she called me and I joined her on the terrace. We looked down below the last of the marble stairs, to the water full of red flowers and bobbing fruits. Marina was not there.

"Wait," she said, "while I go look among the bamboos."

I was considerably astonished by and by to see the tops

of the bamboos waving violently and catch a swift glimpse of some white figure crashing its way through stems and underbrush towards the shore. Almost at once the beat of paddles sounded. I ran beyond the steps, down, and saw a prau splashing hastily out to sea. The figure leaning back in the stern looked extremely like Bobby Young. I called, but he never moved or turned, and in a minute the boat was beyond hail.

As I went back up the steps and into the palace I was just in time to see Marina, in a long old-fashioned bathing gown, slip secretly to her room. The gown was hardly wet. I did not see her mother.

Dinner was silent that night, and after, Marina played no more with her flower balls; she sat apart at the far end of the steps and looked out to the rising of the moon. Yet once or twice I saw her, when she may have thought herself unseen, turn to look at me, and absurdly I imagined she was crying.

Mevrouze, with knitting in hand, took up the tale of the pearl.

“I said, mister, that no one in the world but only my man could have found that pearl. It is true, and no one in the world will maybe ever find one again. He had studied much to cure the diver’s paralysis, which stops the diver, even him with the dress, at thirty fathoms. Now below thirty, below forty and fifty, there are wonderful things, more wonderful as you go, but it is death to find them, for as you are drawn up again you die. It is the nitrogen that fills your blood and stops your heart. My husband found a cure, mister, though nor I nor another knows what. But there was a Malay was very young and strong, and my husband gave it to him, into his veins, and that Malay went down, more and more deep. And on the last time—mister, Frank he said

always that it was the fault of the man. He said it was too far to go, and that the Malay was tempted, as divers are."

"Yes," I said, remembering some of Bobby Young's tales.

"The truth is, he was pulled up that last time, dead. Never he could tell what he saw. But my husband knew. 'He has found what I always believed,' was what he said. 'I have always known that there are giant pearl oysters, as there are giant clams of the sort that can cut a man in two, and they are only a little lower down. And that is what Ahmet has seen,' he said, 'and he has gone mad, and plunged deep, deep after it, without thinking of what I warned him. And he has died,' so he said, and we took the great pearl that was wrapped in Ahmet's sarong—for what the diver finds belongs to the master—and we put it away. 'That shall be for the child's fortune,' he said. Mister, you have heard the rest; you know how my man ended."

"It was a loss to the world," I said. I may have spoken somewhat absently; my mind was running on the events of the afternoon. Had I really seen Bobby Young? What had he been doing there? In the ten days or more of my stay, how often had he met, in secret, the pale Nordic beauty, the "snowy-breasted pearl," and with what intention in his wild, drink-sodden mind?

Whatever there was to know about it, I had no doubt the mother knew by this time. Maybe that was the cause of her silence.

I went to bed with my mind a madness of huge pearls, gaping gigantic oysters underseas, dead divers and dead men of science, and over all the face of the pale-haired beauty, and the cunning, drink-crazed laugh of Bobby Young.

Next morning, however, I had just one thing to think about, and that was the illness of Mrs. Frank Watts. Marina and myself, with the help of the small Malay servitor, were occupied all day ministering to her. She would not have the military doctor brought over from Ternate.

Toward evening she seemed better, and Marina slipped away for a breath of air. The girl looked paler than ever. She had scarcely spoken to me; when not engaged with her mother, she followed me ceaselessly about with her eyes and seemed always as if she were about to ask me some question. But the question never came forth from her thin, rose-tinted lips, that had taken on a sad droop these last few days.

I hardly missed her, I was so busy attending to Mrs. Watts. I knew now that the woman was getting better. She was not so dangerously ill as she had thought. She waked up and stared about her.

"You're better," I told her.

She did not seem to hear me; she looked as if she were listening for some one, or something, beyond my ken. Suddenly she broke into a terrible cry.

"Save her—save her!" she screamed. "Marina—my pearl! In the bamboos. Run fast—leave me!"

I saw that she would fling herself out of bed if I did not obey her. I left the room, ran out through the back veranda and burst into the clump of bamboo.

I don't know what I expected or whether I expected anything, but this was what I found.

Marina and Bobby Young were standing together beside a stone bench that had been set in the shade of the trees. A stranger stood with them—a fattish, dull looking man in a very long white coat. On his head, instead of a helmet, he wore a wide black felt hat. He had a book and was just

closing it. Bobby, as I looked, handed him something that crackled like bank paper.

"I may go?" said the stout man in Dutch, breathing hard. "I am afraid to remain here." He stuffed the notes into his pocket and scuttled down the hill.

I had no difficulty at all in realizing the significance of the little scene, and it affected me just as a lump of stone dropped on my head might have done—struck me almost insensible on my feet.

I stood literally gaping.

Marina did the strangest thing that any new-wed bride can ever have done in the history of marriages. She ran from the parson and the bridegroom, planted herself before me and said fiercely: "So you see other people are married as well as you!"

The parson had disappeared; Bobby Young came towards us both and I saw that he was not quite sober.

"Oh, you child," I cried bitterly, "what have you done?"

"She's married a better man and a smarter man than you," said Bobby, reeling a little. "When I told her you were married and there wasn't an earthly for her, in spite of the sheep's eyes you'd been making, she took me like a bird."

"My wife——" I said, and stopped. What was the use?

Marina had not moved. She still stood in front of me, with her wonderful white-gold hair rising and falling in waves as the sunset wind took it, sweeping up from the lagoon.

"Where is your wife?" she asked.

And I answered her, "I divorced my wife last year."

Young burst out into the whiskey-crazy laugh I had heard in my dreams.

"Well, if that isn't the best joke of the season."

Then he flung an arm round Marina and led her, unresisting, dazed, to the house.

I followed them. I can scarce tell you how I felt. Something had ended, something closed before it was well begun; it was as if bells were ringing to rest an innocent creature that had not lived a day.

I followed them into the great hall. *Mevrouw* had risen, in spite of her weakness. White as a stone, she was sitting in a tarnished old chair of state, her arms clasped tightly about a bundle of blue silks. I think she had been meaning to hide it more safely. There may or may not have been truth in her claims to spirit guidance, but just then she certainly knew what had been happening.

"You have married him!" she said. "Marina, Marina, were you mad?"

"I was," said Marina, shivering a little.

The air was warm; only her own thoughts could have made her tremble. "But—mama," she said, in a kind of wail, "mama! I did not know."

We four looked at each other for a moment in silence.

The mother opened wide her arms and the girl crept in.

It was Young who spoke first. "Well, this is a nice cheerful wedding party, I don't think! Look here, old bean—I'm not so keen on the little cat as all that. Get the old lady to hand over the pearl as big as a walnut and I'll say toodle-oo. Stick me for desertion and restitution and all that as much as you like. Is it a go?"

"Mama! mama!" whispered the child—she was little more. Followed a word or two in Dutch mingled with sobs.

Frank Watts' widow rose to the occasion. She laid aside Marina's clinging arms, undid the silken wrappings of the pearl and, cupping both hands about its glittering heavi-

ness, handed it to Young. I never saw a man more suddenly sobered.

“Is it not big enough for mister?” demanded Emma Watts scornfully.

“That’s the trouble,” said Young, a keen trading look appearing on the face that had one minute earlier been merely fatuous. “It’s too beastly big! A pearl is an ornament, not a blazing curio. One doesn’t use pearls to buzz at people’s heads and break them with; there is only one use for a pearl, and that’s to hang round a girl’s neck. Can you fancy—well, it’s absurd. *Mevrouze*, your flaming pearl isn’t even worth a beastly hundred pounds.”

“Give it to me!” shrieked *Mevrouze* Watts, springing up. “You—you are like the rest. You want my pearl for nothing. You!”

“I wouldn’t have it as a beastly gift,” said Young, tossing it back to her as one tosses a cricket ball.

Mevrouze was standing unsteadily on her feet; her hands shook with weakness. She missed the pearl. Never since the war have I heard such a cry as that she gave when the pearl, passing her eager hands, flew through the air, struck the marble steps and like a falling orange went bump-bumping down. I flung myself after it; so did Young, but neither of us could catch it up. It bounded fearfully, springing higher and higher on each step. In the westering sun it shone as nothing else on earth or sea was ever seen to shine before; I felt—and I think Young must have felt too—a sudden stabbing doubt lest our judgment should, after all, have been mistaken. The thing, even if it had no place among gems, was so lovely.

Then in an instant the loveliness, the miracle, was gone. Watts’ pearl, bounding higher than ever on the last and widest of the steps, had burst. The two halves turned,

sparkling brilliantly at their broken edges, and fell among the floating flowers and bobbing fruits into the deep sea water. Like two stones they sank. And on the landing slab, rolling gently and just coming to rest upon the verge, there was a pearl.

A tiny pearl it seemed.

"Gad, it was one of those M. O. P.'s after all!" shouted Young, using a term that, I remembered, he had explained as meaning a pearl within a pearl—a mother-of-pearl in the true sense.

Suddenly he flung himself after the little rolling sphere.

I saw him stumble as a drunken man stumbles. He reached out, tripped, hit his head with a bone-cracking smash on the marble, and went without a cry into the deep. There was a space of green water for a moment among the floating flowers before they met together again and went, with the oranges, bobbing down the tide.

If he had risen—but I am no diver. He did not rise.

I don't know when we all realized that it was no use standing there staring in the thickening dusk waiting for that to happen which never would. I remember finding myself at the top of the steps again, saying, in a voice that I tried to make commonplace, "It was nobody's fault." And the old woman, her arm round Marina, holding her as if she never would let go, answered me:

"His own fault, mister; let us thank the God who has saved Marina, and the Devil who has taken his own."

"What about the other pearl?" asked Marina suddenly. I opened my hand and showed it. Small? Had I called it small? Now that I saw it away from the huge mother gem in which it had lain concealed—how many hundred years?—I could tell that it was of regal size, a pearl to make a

fortune, though it was not so big as a chestnut, or as a hazelnut even.

It was perhaps as big as the top of a thimble, and it was, beyond that, the purest and most lovely pink pearl that ever left the bottom of the sea.

The Queen of Holland has it now. I have the other pearl.

The Royal Society commissioned me to carry on Frank Watts' work, and we are all living on Klabok, in the restored palace, with a little party of assistant men of science, divers, tenders and helpers. I hope the world may hear more of us by and by. The British Museum wants the first coconut pearl—if we ever find another. But I do not think that I shall trouble much about that.

THE QUEST OF THE TROPIC BIRD

BY JOHN FLEMING WILSON

THE Oldest Journalist in the South Seas sat beside me on the hem of that rusty, much folded cloak of lava which Punch-bowl, the volcano, once flung over the white coral body of lovely Oahu. Just beyond us, the efflorescent surf broke in charming billows of lace over the velvety sand, and seemed to lift with its onrush the edge of the heavy scoriac mantle at our feet. Overhead the trade wind boomed and thundered among the echoing clouds. In our eyes was the shimmer of the sea, the glamour of the vapory sky, shot through now and then by a shuttling silver gull. We were at peace over our pipes.

In the far distance a palpitating spot appeared, grew larger, showed the beating of two slender wings, swung up into the streaming wind like a speedy sloop and passed over us with a faint, throbbing whir. The Oldest Journalist leaned back and stared into the sky.

"There is an article in the encyclopedia," he remarked, "which tells nothing worth knowing about that bird. There is a man who knows the truth. He spent ten years in learning it, and he finally succeeded, with the help of a woman. But he never told all that he knew, and the woman is still lovely and silent. Once a year she sends me a handkerchief with two slender crimson feathers embroidered by her own hand in one corner of it, to show me that she remembers

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that she and I sat on this ledge and watched the sky for her happiness."

"And it came?" I ventured.

"In the form of a contribution to science," he replied. "It began with two feathers lying in the calloused palm of an ex-whaling skipper, and it ended ten years later in an article in a scientific magazine, so far as the world is concerned; but in two feathers embroidered on a handkerchief so far as I, one of the most interested ones, am concerned."

"And the name of the bird?" I suggested.

"—*Phaëthon rubricauda*," he replied.

"That is undoubtedly in the encyclopedia," I retorted. "I'm interested in what that excellent work omits."

He drew from an inside pocket of his white jacket a large silk handkerchief, which he spread out on his knees with a delicate sweep of lean fingers. I saw the crimson embroidery on it of two slender feathers, worked side by side in the sheen of the silk. Underneath, in blue thread, I saw this:

E 171° 34' 11"—S 22° 29' 49"

"Is that in the encyclopedia?" I demanded, pointing to the symbols.

"No," he responded slowly, folding the silk up and putting it away. "That is our secret, the climax of our ten years' watching. I will tell you."

And this was the story he told.

Thirty years ago Captain Edward Haines was one of the wealthiest traders in this ocean, and his house in Honolulu was splendid with furniture out of London, carpets out of Marseilles, and mirrors from Hamburg. But the splendor of his possessions was his daughter Gertrude, a strange beauty to be granted so hard-fisted, loud-mouthed

an ignoramus as old Haines, who could barely move about in his own drawing-room without smashing something, and whose education was got out of an ancient Bowditch. The answer to the puzzle was, of course, her mother. I know nothing about that mysterious woman except that she married Haines in Philadelphia, presented him with Gertrude, and departed to a quieter world. But I've heard Gertrude speak of her at night when the old man was gone grumbling to his club and the wind was dying among the trees. She told me she was very lovely, quite the lady, and I judge that she was unfit to be the mate of so blustery a fellow as the ex-whalersman.

Not that Haines didn't do his duty by the girl, as he saw it. He sent her on the *Flying Cloud* clear to New York for her schooling, kept her in money, and wrote her a letter once in six months, beginning "Yrs duley rec'd" and ending with the prodigious scrawl of his name. When she was eighteen years old he sent for her to come back to the islands, and in the interval before her arrival he built the mansion on Punahou that still blinks at the sun with its tattered finery and blurred mirrors.

This was a gay city in those days, and it wasn't long till Gertrude Haines ruled it with a somewhat austere scepter. For if she had inherited her mother's gentle beauty, she had also much of her father's strong fiber. She had been to school, and that in a region where education and conduct are important. Here in Honolulu she found a boisterous society, mingled of a dozen races, and complaisant to the last degree as regards the stricter moralities. She refused to conform to it. She blighted the hopes of rude spirits that would have taken the citadel of her heart by storm, and let it be known that she was willing to be worshiped but would not be adored.

All this gave great satisfaction to Haines. It suited his rough pride that his daughter should scorn those whom he scorned; if she went farther and rejected the advances of men whom he respected and thought worthy of her, men with parcels in schooners and islands of shell, he accepted it as a fresh proof of her superiority, and boasted of it to the fallen faces of the snubbed. "My girl is a clipper," he loudly asserted. "She sails her own course. And I guess her old man has the coin to finance anything she may fancy. And if she don't fancy anybody here, that's her lookout."

His pride had a tumble when Thomas Jenkins arrived on the scene with a box of books, spectacles, a silk hat, and job teaching Natural Science at Punahou College; for that impecunious, self-contained, single-minded genius not only fell in love with Gertrude Haines (as we all had done), but affected her haughty spirit to the point where she learned new songs to sing to him bending over her guitar in the evenings.

The worthy captain's confidence in his daughter's distaste for all men blinded him a while. But he woke up one day to discover that Jenkins, the wholly ineligible, held a place in Gertrude's heart that none other did or could, even himself. His wrath was terrific. All King Street resounded to his vociferous threats. He confronted Jenkins and forbade him the place. To his amazement, the petty professor of Natural Science refused to be so summarily dismissed, referred to Miss Haines, spoke calmly of "social position" and "regard for Gertrude's feelings." Haines sent for the girl and roared at her his orders to send Jenkins away forever. He was dumfounded when she flatly denied his authority. "I have some duties as hostess," she informed her raging parent. "Mr. Jenkins has conducted

himself most becomingly. He will be a welcome guest so far as I am concerned."

"But he wants to marry you and get my money!" the old fellow bawled.

Here Jenkins stepped in. Really, the lad had plenty of ballast. He faced the ex-whaler with the calmness of a man thoroughly in earnest and wholly unabashed.

"I've never asked your daughter to marry me," he said, quietly. "But you are quite right in saying that I wish her for my wife. You are wrong as to the money. I don't want it and wouldn't accept it, my dear sir, much as I respect you. I have my profession."

Imagine Haines' dumb anger. He stared (yes, I was there) from Gertrude to Jenkins and then from the professor to his daughter. Finally he found words: "Your profession!" he shouted at him. "What is that? Teaching beggarly natives to read and write?"

Jenkins smiled. "I might do worse than that," he remarked. "But I am a scientist. In time I shall publish a book. Then I shall ask your daughter to marry me."

Jenkins didn't see anything out of the way in asserting that he would demand the hand of the richest girl in Hawaii *nei*. In fact, he distinctly gave us to understand that he considered himself fully Gertrude's equal socially and financially. It was something new for the rough skipper and he took another tack. "What's this book about?" he demanded. "Sugar? Shell? Anything useful? Any money in it?"

"It's about birds," Jenkins answered him firmly. "The birds of these regions have never been studied with thoroughness. I've already found many new species and one new genus. I shall be famous."

All this time Gertrude had stood in the shadow, staring at Jenkins with a look in her eyes that neither I nor any other

man had ever seen there. Now she stepped out and spoke bravely, "Papa, you don't understand. Back in Philadelphia everybody would recognize Mr. Jenkins' work. He will be famous some day."

Haines shook his huge head. "Do you love that fellow?" he bellowed at her.

The professor intervened, like the gentleman he was. "You have no right to ask that question," he told him bluntly. "I've never dared ask her myself. But it's my privilege to put that question to her." He turned to her quietly and with a profound longing in his eyes. "Some day I'll ask you that," he said. "When I have succeeded. Not till then. But when I have a name to offer you, I hope—maybe—you may—" He stopped in great confusion.

Gertrude blushed. I surmised then what that answer would be. Haines, on the other hand, grasped at a straw. "What is this big thing you expect to do?" he demanded. "What great task are you at that will ever justify you in trying to marry my girl?"

Jenkins was no fool, and he caught the defiance and the sarcasm, but he answered the skipper without a trace of embarrassment. "I'm working on the habits of the *Phaëthon rubricauda*. It's not known where they breed."

"Phaeton ruby cauder," repeated Haines, blankly. "What's that?"

Gertrude looked up. "It's the scientific name for the tropic bird, papa," she told him. "The one you get the red feather from that costs so much and you sell the queen for her ornaments."

This ended that conversation. Haines retired, in a brown study. Gertrude timidly shook Jenkins' hand, excused herself to me, and followed her father into the house. I walked back to town with the professor, who stamped along, glaring

through his spectacles at the palms lofty against the dark sky, and apparently unconscious of my presence till I reminded him of it by saying, "I guess you've beat us all out, Jenkins. She's a fine girl, the finest I know of."

He came down from the clouds long enough to shake my hand and say, "I must get to work harder than ever. The father is impossible. I don't see how she endures his ignorance and self-sufficiency. But I hope soon to solve the mystery of the *Phaëthon rubricauda*, and then I'll ask her to marry me. You are quite right. She is a nice girl."

"I thought you asked her to-night to be your wife," I said, a little acidly.

"It wouldn't be fair," he calmly responded. "I'm not prepared as yet to marry."

So it goes, I thought. The busy and indifferent chap whose eyes are fixed on some distant, possibly worthless object, picks up in passing the affection of a woman whom other men would die to marry. Here was a scientist, wrapped up in his intellectual vapors, putting aside the most important business in the world to follow a bird of no earthly consequence except for the price brought by its scarlet tail feathers.

The next day I met Haines. He stopped me and drew me to the edge of the pavement. "Look here," he said, curtly. "Gertrude thinks she wants to marry that bird catcher. What is his phaethon ruby cauder?"

I explained, and he pondered this for a full five minutes, wiping his ruddy forehead constantly. Then he dived into a pocket and hauled out two crimson feathers. "Are these the feathers he's after?" he inquired. "They're worth two reals a pair and they're pretty scarce. Did he say he could find them? Find where they breed?"

"He did," I replied.

The old chap's face took on a shrewd expression. He looked me straight in the eye. "Do you know anything about it?"

I was truthful. "I know nothing," I assured him. "I never took too much interest in birds, anyway. But Jenkins seems determined to find out all he can about this tropic bird, and, if he does find out their breeding ground, I suppose he can get all the feathers he wants."

Haines studied this over and shook his head. "Gertie has always been square with me," he said, slowly. "But she says she intends to marry that scamp if he gets what he's after. She promised me she wouldn't look at him again if he didn't make good. Now where do you reckon them birds make their nests?"

I didn't know, of course. I suggested that Jenkins was the man to give that information. Haines grumbled, and went on his way.

Two days later the professor met me with beaming eyes. "I have cruelly misjudged Captain Haines," he said, most informally. "The man is really interested in scientific ornithology. He sent for me and asked me a lot of questions. Now he is going to help me in my work. I am just going to see about leave of absence from my duties at the college."

I was interested, of course, not only personally, but as a newspaper man. "Tell me all about it," I urged him.

It appeared that Haines had summoned Jenkins to his office, and there demanded of him all that he knew about the tropic bird. "I told him it was migratory," the professor narrated, proudly, "though it had never been proved, and that it was a mistake to say that it was found only between the Tropics. I told him I was sure that the specimens found here were from a nesting place possibly many hundreds of miles away, whither they returned at certain times of the

year. He wished to know where I thought this place was, and when I told him I reckoned it to be far south of the equator, the generous old man offered to give me a schooner and outfit and let me go find it. I leave next week."

I recovered myself as best I could and asked one more question: "What schooner did he give you?"

"The *Haleákalá*," he answered, simply.

When he had gone his way, I relieved my feelings by going down and staring at the *Haleákalá*, which had already been hauled into a berth for refitting. You never heard of her. She belonged to a time long past. In the early days she was well known, but even close-fisted Haines had been forced to lay her up for lack of men to sail her. She was old, rotten, weedy, twisted, tender, unseaworthy as an overripe pumpkin. I suppose she had swung in the warm tides of Pearl Harbor for a good five years when Haines offered her to the sadly benighted professor. And as I viewed her ancient lines and scanned her decayed rigging, I thought I discerned something of the old whalersman's purpose. Shrewd he was, too shrewd for the unworldly Jenkins. I really intended to go and tell the poor fellow what a joke had been played on him, but I confess to feeling bitterly toward him. After all, a man must take his chances.

Nothing of this penetrated Jenkins' head. He made Honolulu ring with praises of Haines. Even Gertrude, who loved him, didn't dare interfere and tell him the *Haleákalá* was a floating coffin and would never last to get him anywhere but to a quick and painful death. Then again, you see, Jenkins had offered this as the price of her marrying him—that he should do this thing; and she wasn't the woman to lower her value a penny.

Haines actually spent quite a bit of money on apparatus for the "Haines Ornithological Expedition," buying sup-

plies lavishly, and instruments that Jenkins thought he might require. We gave the expedition several columns in the paper, noting that Professor Jenkins was an eminent naturalist, late of Dartmouth College, and that his backer was the prominent financier and ship owner, Edward Haines, of Punahou. When the *Haleákalá* sailed, we made a gala party on the wharf, and cheered him to the echo, flinging *leis* to the crazy decks of the schooner with cries of good will, though the very *kanakas* handling coal in the sheds near by knew that it was some bitter jest of Captain Haines.

As it was impossible to get a good crew for such a craft, even for a short voyage, and as it was known that the *Haleákalá* was bound for the other side of the equator, Haines put a drunken Portuguese aboard as master, and gave him for hands a choice collection of Iwilei waifs, allowing them the alternative of either going on this voyage or spending five years on an out-island plantation.

It would be supposed that Gertrude, not having dared rebel, would at least have mourned for Jenkins after his departure on such a voyage. But she didn't appear to. She went her serene way as of old, was nice to us all, pleasant to those of us who still crowded her *lanai* evenings. She sang to the guitar as sweetly as ever, and if she remembered Jenkins, she gave no indication of it.

Two months passed, and the skipper of the *Haleákalá* and three men turned up per schooner from the Gilberts, and reported that their vessel had foundered three hundred miles off shore, with the loss of Thomas Jenkins and the cook. The papers gave several columns of the survivors' story of the ill-fated "Haines Ornithological Expedition," the faculty of Punahou passed appropriate resolutions, and Haines chuckled savagely over his cigar, though he loudly

professed regret over the loss of his excellent friend Jenkins and his fine schooner and her valuable cargo. Gertrude put the guitar away in its case, very simply told us that she wouldn't receive us any more, as she didn't feel well, and retired into herself. She allowed me to ask her a question, seeing that I had been present when Haines had taxed Jenkins with loving her, and in answer to it she said that she hadn't given up hope.

A year after the *Haleákalá* left Honolulu, Captain Haines called me into his office and said stumbingly, "I made a mistake, I guess, in sending that science fellow off in that schooner. Gertie won't speak to me. I'm getting kind of old, and the house is awful dull. She says I killed him. I wish you'd drop up to the house and tell Gertie—" He was too late. What it was he wanted me to tell the girl no one will ever exactly know, for his face got purple, he stared at me with an astonished look in his eyes, and slid heavily from his chair to the floor, dead of an apoplexy.

So the papers had more columns, this time describing the romantic life and wonderful prosperity of the ex-whaling captain. Then he passed out of Honolulu gossip, and his memory remained only in the aching heart of the woman who kept sorry house out Punahou way.

Gertrude, whom few of us had seen that year, came freshly to mind, no longer as the lovely hostess and the desirable wife, but as the shrewdest business woman south of the North Pole. She was still beautiful, more beautiful, indeed, than she had ever been. But the father of her was in the ascendant, and she took over his large properties, his vessels, his islands, his trading stations, his plantations, and delved into their management and mastered their intricacies till half Honolulu was traveling to the door of the big office to ask Haines *Wahine* (so they called her) how to do this

and what to do there. She told them, without any dilly-dallying or hesitation. Six months after Edward Haines was laid away in Kawaiahao, Gertrude was running the old business with double the old energy and success. She was active, capable, and imperious. Men who dealt with her shook their heads and remarked that she was no fool. So I was amazed one afternoon, when I had walked out to one of her favorite spots for the air, to find her lying on her face, sobbing into her hands.

I made bold to sit down and wait till she recovered herself. Then I asked her what the matter was. "It's none of my business," I told her plainly, "but I think just enough of you to feel badly when you come out here to cry. What is it?"

I shan't tell you what she said, more than to state that Gertrude Haines hadn't forgotten in business the poor scientist who had started out so joyously two years before to find out where the *Phaëthon rubricauda* has its nesting place. And she hadn't given up hope that he was alive and thinking of her. Women never do till they see the clenched hands and feel the cold lips. I told her what her father had started to say when he was stricken with apoplexy. You ought to have seen her pretty forehead wrinkle and her lips quiver. "Papa meant to tell me something about Tom," she announced after long cogitation. "Tom is alive, somewhere down south. The next question is to find him."

She was so happy in the thought that I dared not say a word to wither her joy. I knew it was foolish to be silent, but men have gladly done foolish things before now, when a woman was concerned. "I'll find him," she told me. "Tom will send me word. He's a scientist, and he'll know what to do. I'm so glad he explained some things to me."

"What things?" I demanded, bluntly.

"About the *Phaëthon rubricauda*," she replied. "You see, he was to send me a message when he found out the place." She jumped up, all excitement. "And I've never tried to do my part, either," she exclaimed. "And he may have sent me word!"

To be frank, I thought that the girl had gone crazy. She didn't allow me to say another word, but implored me to find her a hack at Waikiki to fetch her home post-haste. I did, and she left me without a word of thanks, glowing into the dingy interior of that prosaic vehicle as though she saw Tom Jenkins opposite her.

Next day word went out from the Haines office that the red tail feathers of tropic birds—*Phaëthon rubricauda*—were doubled in price for two months. Half native Honolulu bestirred itself to go around and ask Gertrude if this were so. To each man she gave the assurance that the price was indeed doubled, and she added to this an injunction to carefully examine all birds caught.

I happened to meet old Norton, skipper of her principal schooner, the *Mariana*, and he told me that his chief had instructed him to cruise through the lower islands and look for tropic birds exclusively. "She's a mighty shrewd woman," he said confidentially, "and you can bet that the price of red feathers has gone up on the Coast. She never makes a misplay, she don't, pretty as she is."

The two months passed and the offer was renewed, this time indefinitely. The year saw crimson feathers piled in bales in the Haines warehouse as schooner after schooner from the south reported in, and still Gertrude kept the price up, to the amazement and horror of rival houses who swore that no market in the world could absorb the supplies she pitched into it. The rumors grew that Miss Haines had lost her mind. Loyal skippers and devoted traders grumbled at

orders to pick up any birds that could be got, and, if necessary, to stop in mid-ocean to capture one. Norton was over his enthusiasm, and avowed his conviction that the Haines trade was going to the dogs. "Here's that last order," he told me one night. "I'm to run the *Mariana* down to the leeward islands, and cruise around till I find a young bird with black arrowhead markings on it. And Thompson at Fiti has been waiting four months overtime for me to come down and restock his station and bring up his copra. Did you ever hear of such foolishness?"

At various times I saw Gertrude, and at last I ventured to tell her what people were saying about her. She smiled and shook her head. "I'm running the Haines business for the sole benefit of myself," she said. "If it breaks, nobody loses but myself. I'll admit that my looking for more feathers seems foolish; but Tom explained the habits of the bird to me, and I know that sooner or later I'll hear from him."

"How?" I demanded.

"Come and I'll tell you," she responded. "I'm bound out there now, and if you promise to say nothing, I'll take you along."

I was sure she had lost her mind. I went with her, sick at heart. She brought me past Waikiki to this spot, the place where I first found her, crying. It was here that we sat, as you and I are doing now. And just the same way just the same bird appeared suddenly out there and swept overhead. It seemed to please Gertrude beyond all reason. "He mightn't have got there last year," she said in her puzzling way. "But this year I'll surely hear from him."

I suppose my blank looks informed her that I was at sea, for she laughed and explained: "That is the first tropic bird to cross the *pali* this year. Tom told me they

nest somewhere down south, and each year go back there. When the nesting season is over the birds fly north again. I come out here every day, and that's the first I've seen this year. See!" she cried, "there's another one. They are flying up from the south. Surely I'll hear from Tom this year. I know he will find the island where they breed and he'll send me up word by one of them, by cutting a little from its tail feathers or tying a message to its leg, like they do with carrier pigeons."

Then I understood for the first time. But I was doubtful about the professor's ever getting off the schooner alive, more doubtful about his ever finding the looked-for island, still more dubious about the accuracy of his scientific theory. And, suppose he had survived the sinking of the *Haleákalá*, and reached the nesting place of the tropic bird, and they were "homers," what chance was there that the bird he might catch and tie a message to would ever fall into the hands of Gertrude Haines? Now I saw through her wasteful anxiety to catch all the birds possible and to get their feathers. She was looking for the message.

For five years the Haines schooners picked up tropic birds and delivered crimson feathers to the big office in Honolulu. In all that time came never a word from Tom Jenkins. But Gertrude, now a mature and beautiful woman of twenty-five, still smiled when people remarked on her infatuation for the *Phaëthon rubricauda*, and she continued to order her skippers and traders to keep a sharp eye out for the red-billed bird. Then Norton, old and grizzled, came into port on a fine morning, dropped his hook and scurried ashore to drive furiously out to Punahou. An hour later Gertrude sent for me. When I got there she was pacing up and down the *lanai*, her face alight with happi-

ness, expectation, and eagerness. "It's come," she cried out to me.

"The message?" I demanded.

She burst into tears, and I took from her hand a thin bit of shell with two tiny holes in it through which ran a filament of fish sinew. I fancy the film of mother-of-pearl was about an inch long and half an inch broad. Scratched on it I read this:

FOLLOW RUBRICAUDAS
SEPT. T. JENKINS——

The girl was beyond power of speech, and I studied the little inscription, in the light of what I knew, till she had recovered herself. "What does it mean?" I asked.

"It means that he has thought of me all these years," she said. "And he knew that I would never forget and I'd be anxious. He's succeeded. This is the proof of it."

I brought her back to the subject. "What does this writing mean? How do you know it is from him—after all these years? How did you get it?"

She sat down and gazed out toward the waving palm fronds. "Captain Norton picked the bird up off Maui," she said slowly. "This was tied to its leg. I know it is from Tom because it is signed with his name, and because he always explained that these birds were homers, and if one had once been to Hawaii it would come back after the nesting season, no matter how far away the island was. He's found the island where they nest. That's where he is now. And I must go to him, for he hasn't any vessel and no way of coming home."

At first this seemed simple enough, till I recalled that no one knew where this island, or islands, were, and the slight message seemed to me to give little clew except the direc-

tion "follow south." All this I made plain to her, but she was undaunted. I think it was enough for her to know that Jenkins was alive, and that he had sent word to her painstakingly by a messenger of his own discovery, leaving her to guess his plight. I left her to dream.

In the morning she sent for me to come to her office. I found her amidst the orderly, austere environs of her great business. Clerks plodded through invoices and posted books within a few feet of her. Men waited in the ante-room, holding their caps on their knees. And she sat at her desk, with the light of the open sea on her face, careless of all the routine of finance and trade, her hands idle in her lap. "I've thought it all out," she told me. "This is only April. We must wait till September. Tom is right. I've watched them, and they don't start back south till nearly October. We must follow them."

You have no notion how plain the matter looked to us then. In the future we were to follow certain easily discerned rosy-colored birds south till they came to perch on some island. There we would find Professor Jenkins. I promised to accompany her.

I pass over the next few months till a day in August when, on this very spot, we saw the whirring flight of a crimson bird along the great stream of the Trades. At sight of it Gertrude heaved a sigh and rose to her feet. "Now we can go," she said.

Each afternoon we had hurried out here to see whether any *Phaëthon rubricauda* was homing southward, for Gertrude, with all her sweet confidence in Jenkins' accurate scientific knowledge, hoped that it might be July or August instead of September that the great homing began. But the professor was right. So it was the fifth of September when the *Mariana*, with Norton in command and Gertrude

and me on deck, slipped out of Honolulu and headed south on the final quest for the home of *Phaëthon rubricauda*.

It was a strange voyage. We dropped like a stone down the blue Pacific latitudes under roaring skies, till we lost the Trades and entered that region where the percentage of calm days marked on the charts jumps from nothing up to disheartening figures; where the sea runs in vast, silent currents, rippled by faint breaths, torn by fierce squalls, driven in headlong floods by living gales. The schooner swung slowly down toward the equator, and we searched the heavens intently for a sight of those crimson guides who were to lead us to the remote and unknown island where Jenkins waited. Really, it was ridiculous the way we craned our necks and fixed watering eyes on the illimitable firmament. Dawn found us peering into its blaze for a glimpse of a soaring bird. Sunset and darkness saw us straining our sight for the flash of a diving *phaëthon*. When we saw one, Norton would reckon its course and lay the schooner after it with all white sails straining from the masts till a flaw brought us up with thrashing sheets and we were buried in the smother of a squall.

September passed, and October and November, and we still sailed blindly south, now veering far to the westward after some vagrant bird, now driving full east because a floating *phaëthon*, high in the clear air, seemed leisurely headed on that course. Never was such a voyage. The chart showed that we zigzagged across forty odd degrees of longitude and down twenty degrees of latitude, when December caught us frying on the equator no wiser than when we started out. Norton was for turning back, or running to the east. The crew dozed in the shadows, grumbling at their food. Even I was thoroughly convinced of the use-

lessness of our search. But Gertrude, browned and thin, shook her head at any suggestion of failure. We sailed on.

Not that we didn't see plenty of the red-bills; not that we didn't find many signs of their general direction. But those seas are full of strong currents and baffling winds. Our vessel, speedy and staunch as she was, couldn't be expected to keep pace with the whirring tropic birds, nor could she breast the tremendous seas that now and then rose before some far-away gale and sent us dizzily careering under the swinging stars. In those thousands of leagues of ocean, Jenkins sat (we imagined) on some peaked island, watching for us. We fancied that, far above us, out of sight in the azure, his messengers were winging their way northward, bearing his cry for us to come. And we were helpless in the immensity of the world of water.

January passed and February came. We had crossed the line, and Norton, muttering savagely over his slate, was reckoning the days till we should reach the other tropic. "Beyond that there's no need for us to go," he swore. "Nobody ever saw one of them red-bills further north than Capricorn, nor further south than Cancer. It's no use, Miss Gertrude; you can't change nature."

"I'm glad of it," she would say cheerfully. "For Professor Jenkins knows that, and we can trust him. We must go south."

Though we had passed islands, the solitude now became terrific. We never saw a sail, nor a smudge of smoke on the horizon. We couldn't distinguish the shining days. The nights were resplendent with an unvarying and oppressive brilliance. We marked our progress by the rising of the Southern Cross toward the zenith, till it opened above us, like a lit window in the dark arch of the sky.

On the second day of March, Norton made his longitude

in the afternoon, scowled at the slate and called Gertrude. "I may as well tell you that this business is ended," he told her gruffly. "Our stores are getting low. We haven't seen a tropic bird for a week, and it's been two months since we saw any to amount to anything. I'm main sorry, Miss Gertrude, but we've got to quit."

She stared at him, put her sunburned hands quickly over her face and went to the rail. We saw that she was shaken with sobs. The old skipper and I looked at each other, and waited. She said nothing, but leaned against the gently lifting rail in an attitude of intense grief, like a woman who had suddenly looked into a grave.

You understand, she made no demur, no appeal to us. She accepted our decision. But I think that the long years of her waiting and loving him seemed to her to have ended in a blank, to have terminated in a flash, like a dream. Remember, she had kept up, as we say; maintained her serenity, her poise, her business-like capacity all this time. She had smiled and gone her way among us like one who must be busy because soon one will want leisure. And now it was finished, and her faithful skipper and I watched her, hoping for a look, for a word. But she didn't raise her face from her hands. She made no sound, apart from that suppressed sobbing. Norton tried to create a diversion by roaring at the seamen to break out a fresh spinnaker cloth, but his hearty words died on his lips and he found himself staring at the pitiful figure of the poor girl on the quarterdeck. He licked his lips, shook his head and burst out, "We'll keep going, by G—, till the last biscuit's eaten and the last plank's gone from under us!" Under his brawny arms the faithful schooner swung up again into the south.

Gertrude showed us a face ravaged by grief. It was awful, the haggardness that had overtaken her. Youth and bloom

seemed to have fled. Her voice had lost its gentle purity. "Please help me find him!" she cried.

The next morning Norton called me before dawn, tip-toeing into my berth. "I think we've got a hint," he whispered to me. "Come on deck."

I followed him, and he showed me a newly fledged bird lying on the hatch, which showed by the lantern's light strange markings on its back, like arrowheads. I looked at him for an interpretation. "That's a young one, a young red-bill," he remarked. "Miss Gertrude once sent me on a three-months' cruise to find where they could be got. This one hit the rigging and the cook caught it. We can't be far from their nests."

We didn't call Gertrude, but Norton carefully headed the *Mariana* up close to the wind. "Those young ones can't fly against any breeze," he remarked. "So that island must be to windward."

At daybreak Gertrude came on deck and we told her of our discovery. She went over and picked the little fledgling into her warm breast and smiled at us.

The next few days brought us little encouragement, but within the week the *Mariana* slowly forged into the edge of the southeast trades, and, borne on their powerful current, we saw clouds of roseate birds, vast multitudes swinging easily to the north. We caught some of the weaker ones and found them all marked with the tell-tale arrows.

Our excitement was intense. The fresh winds blowing out of the cold antarctic, softened as they were by sweeping over hundreds of leagues of warm sea, toned us up and drove away all lassitude. We scanned the horizon for land, searched the sky for signs of some reflection that would tell us in what quarter to seek for it. And on the twelfth day

of March we found it a slight shimmering spot on the sea line.

Norton headed the *Mariana* to windward of it and all day we stemmed a stiff current, gradually raising the island till we saw that it was very small, rocky, and apparently desolate. Gertrude stood in the forerigging, swinging now outboard, now inboard as the vessel heeled over to the lift of the sea. Night fell, and Norton took in sail so that we should not overrun the spot in darkness. None of us slept, for overhead we seemed to hear the dim whirr of wings, the soft passage of thronging birds going north from their nesting place. The dawn showed us the islet, for it was no more than that, a mile to leeward of us.

I'm sure my own disappointment was keen. In a region where no chart that we possessed indicated land, rose a rock not over a mile in extent. So far as we could see it was verdureless. Its craggy steeps rose possibly a hundred feet, and at the base of it the great Pacific rollers broke in leaping foam. Gertrude voiced the thought of us all: "There is no light there. Nobody is there."

Norton shook his head. "There's no landing place on this side, but on the lee we may find a bight!"

It was noon when the *Mariana* weathered the southeastern point and we wore ship and stood down to leeward. Here the islet bore a different aspect. It was still rocky, but a small indentation ran in to a narrow beach. The color of the water showed that there was plenty of depth clear up under the cliff. "No holding ground there," the skipper said. "We'll send a boat ashore."

With no more words a boat was cleared away, and into it Norton, Gertrude, and myself got with a couple of hands. As we pulled away from the *Mariana*, which had been our home for so long, I felt a sudden distaste for the whole af-

fair. I can recall even now my repugnance to ever going back to the ship, my intense, if baseless, longing to be done with the search, to know no more of mystery and anticipation and sick waiting. I think that Gertrude felt the same way, for she was silent, sitting listlessly on the thwart, her eyes but half seeing the poor, barren eminence that represented the goal of all the years of her expectancy.

It was calm in the lee of the islet, and we quickly made the bight and the little slender shore. We were startled to see a man standing on the edge of the water, evidently trying to launch some sort of boat. Norton looked over at me and shook his head. The keel of our boat rasped on the shale.

Imagine a slender, sunburned man with a reddish beard and no clothes to speak of, a spindle-shanked, deep-ribbed fellow, with short-sighted eyes. That was the man who came forward and croaked at us on that little shore, leaving his queer canoe or whatever it was to toss in the edge of the gentle surf. Only Gertrude knew that it was Jenkins. She gazed at him with all her eyes, quivering. And he said, "Did you get my message?"

I had fancied that when she found him she would glow with love and affection and satisfied devotion. Instead she stammered, twined the fingers of her hands together, flushed, grew pale, was all but speechless. "I came as soon as I could," she said.

Norton broke in here with his hoarse tones. "Are you the professor? What have you had to eat on this God-forsaken rock?"

Jenkins, for it was he, shook his head. "There wasn't any way of starting a fire," he said dully.

Well, that was about the gist of it. The great romance dwindled into a tragedy: years without a fire, or a light, or soft food; huddling in the darkness, shivering in the chill,

defenseless, houseless, solitary, he had existed from season to season, scratching his brief messages on splinters of shell which he tied to the tropic birds in the hope that one might reach Gertrude and tell her that he had succeeded and lived.

On the *Mariana* we fitted him out with clothes, and Norton even dug up an old pair of spectacles that helped his sight. Then Gertrude came to him and asked coldly, "Is there anything on the island that you want to take with you?"

"Nothing," he told her. "Nothing at all. What is the longitude and latitude?"

Norton figured it for him and the result was what is embroidered on my handkerchief. "I'm glad to know that," the professor said gently. "I tried for three years to figure it out, but having no instruments I couldn't do it, couldn't even approximate it."

It seems that Jenkins (from his story) had been abandoned on the leaking *Haleákalá* and, sticking to the waterlogged craft, had finally come ashore on some forsaken island where his most careful investigation failed to discover any signs of human habitation. The cook, who had stayed with him, died from eating some poisonous fish. Jenkins decided that he could move on, having a poor, ramshackle small boat left him on the now derelict schooner. Instead of returning north, he continued his search and headed south, feeling that his sole hope lay in reaching the nesting place of the *Phaëthon rubricauda* and thence sending messages till one was received. It took him years of arduous and incredible voyaging to find the island where we had come upon him. He had sailed in the small boat, from reef to island and from island to reef, till it had fallen to pieces under him. Strange, barbarous people had fed him and tried to keep him with them. He had sailed on, in canoes, on rafts, on

floating logs, always south, always in the direction from which he saw the fledgling tropic birds come. Nobody, I presume, could relate a tithe of his sorrows, of his agonies, of his sufferings, of his vast endurance, of his unshakable confidence in his scientific theory that the *Phaëthon rubricauda* was a "homer," and not a mere vagabond fowl. So he finally, to cut an interminable story short, reached this rocky islet. There he stayed, daily trying to catch another bird to which to affix the message he had scratched in the dusk, eating raw flesh, devouring raw eggs, sleeping in the open, trying to keep himself alive till he should be able to return.

All this he told us very simply and briefly that night as the *Mariana* headed north with the trades in the belly of her sails. And when he had finished Gertrude leaned forward and said softly, "Tom, didn't you know I would come?"

"No," he answered, quietly.

"But you sent me a message—messages. Didn't you think I would answer them and come?"

He seemed hugely embarrassed. "I did. I—I hoped you might get some of them. But I didn't know you would come, Miss—Gertrude."

She seemed appalled at the outcome of her quest. Here she was, after ten years, facing the man she loved, whom she had rescued from death on a lonely islet by almost miraculous effort and tenacity. And he told her he didn't know she would come. And she came because she had thought of him confidently looking night and day across the barren sea for a sign of the sail that was bringing her. In the reaction she got up and walked away, biting her poor, quivering lips. Jenkins looked after her a moment and then turned to Norton. "By the way, what did you make the position of that island?"

But Norton had caught a glimpse of Gertrude's face and

shuffled off without reply. The professor turned to me. "I don't exactly understand," he told me with some hesitation. "What have I done? Miss Gertrude—Miss Haines seems hurt. What have I done?"

I didn't want to explain, for really he hadn't done anything tangible. He had merely disappointed foolish hopes, dissipated dreams that he couldn't have known anything about. "She's been trying for years to find you," I remarked. "She's spent thousands of dollars. Nobody else in the whole world, my dear fellow, even remembered that you existed. And she's found you, and she——"

He stared thoughtfully when I paused, then looked sharply up. I followed his glance and saw Gertrude, standing just behind Jenkins. "What were you going to do, professor," she inquired quietly, "if nobody came and found you?"

He rose. "Oh, I had built a boat. I was coming back," he said. "I worked on my little canoe all this last year."

"Back where?" she demanded. "And how? How could you get back? It's more than two thousand miles to Honolulu."

"I was coming back the way I came," he answered, gravely. "It took me several years to reach the island. I hoped to get back in two."

"But why did you keep on, after the schooner went ashore and the men had deserted you? Why didn't you try to come back to civilization instead of running deeper into an uncharted ocean?"

"Have you forgotten?" he asked, with a sudden intensity in his voice. "Have you forgotten?"

She seemed to waken at the tone. "Forgotten what?" she demanded, huskily.

"That I couldn't ask you to be my wife till I had suc-

ceeded. That was the promise I made. It was the condition on which your father gave me the schooner. I couldn't go back, for I should have lost you. I came on."

"You came on—a thousand miles—years, all alone!" she whispered. "All that you could ask me to marry you?"

"That is true," he said, gently. "And when I had succeeded I was trying to start back—for you."

She answered him never a word while she thought, bright-eyed, finger on lip. What did she think about? I suppose she saw in fancy this gaunt, haggard, lean scientist, deserted by a drunken crew, a rotten schooner broken up under his feet, still pushing on across an unknown and desolate sea, paddling himself in a toppling canoe under broiling suns, battling for life in the welter of tempest-driven tides, always looking up for the crimson flash of the bird whose nesting place he must find. Possibly she saw the vista of all those years, the grim steadfastness of the man, the simplicity of his love, the pride of him, the amazing strength of his passion. I don't doubt but that she saw, too, the years from which she had saved him: the stubborn, weary, thirsty voyage in his wretched canoe from desert isle to desert isle, the horrible agony of his return to her, the endless months of his infinite strife to come back and claim her—all the bitterness he had purposed to endure, all the astounding and incredible persistence of his love.

When she spoke again she said, haltingly, "And you didn't know I would come?"

He shook his head. "You sent me no message, you didn't tell me you cared."

She broke out in a cry of understanding. "I could have sent you a message! And I didn't know . . . of course . . . what must you have thought . . . but you were coming back?"

"Yes," he answered. "But you sent no word by the birds, for I watched them each season and I knew some of them had been in Honolulu and seen you, and yet none of them bore any message."

Of course it was true. If the *Phaëthon rubricauda* went one way, it would return the other. Ridiculous, wasn't it, that it never occurred to us? But she was satisfied. "Tom," she whispered, "I never thought of it. So I came myself . . . are you sorry? . . . Tom . . ."

As I rejoined Norton by the wheel I thought I heard a whirr overhead, the soft speeding of a tropic bird out of the deep south into the blooming north. Norton must have heard the same noise, for he grinned at me across the binnacle and said, "Now we'll follow them home."

"And the professor wrote his book?" I inquired.

"Yes, and the articles for the encyclopedias and magazines. But you won't find the position of that island in any of 'em," said the Oldest Journalist. "Gertrude says that is their island. She sends me a handkerchief each year to remind me where it lies."

THE STRIDING PLACE

BY GERTRUDE ATHERTON

WEIGALL, continental and detached, tired early of grouse-shooting. To stand propped, against a sod fence while his host's workmen routed up the birds with long poles and drove them towards the waiting guns, made him feel himself a parody on the ancestors who had roamed the moors and forests of this West Riding of Yorkshire in hot pursuit of game worth the killing. But when in England in August he always accepted whatever proffered for the season, and invited his host to shoot pheasants on his estates in the South. The amusements of life, he argued, should be accepted with the same philosophy as its ills.

It had been a bad day. A heavy rain had made the moor so spongy that it fairly sprang beneath the feet. Whether or not the grouse had haunts of their own, wherein they were immune from rheumatism, the bag had been small. The women, too, were an unusually dull lot, with the exception of a new-minded *débutante* who bothered Weigall at dinner by demanding the verbal restoration of the vague paintings on the vaulted roof above them.

But it was no one of these things that sat on Weigall's mind as, when the other men went up to bed, he let himself out of the castle and sauntered down to the river. His intimate friend, the companion of his boyhood, the chum of his college days, his fellow-traveler in many lands, the man for whom he possessed stronger affection than for all men, had

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mysteriously disappeared two days ago, and his track might have sprung to the upper air for all trace he had left behind him. He had been a guest on the adjoining estate during the past week, shooting with the fervor of the true sportsman, making love in the intervals to Adeline Cavan, and apparently in the best of spirits. As far as was known there was nothing to lower his mental mercury, for his rent-roll was a large one, Miss Cavan blushed whenever he looked at her, and, being one of the best shots in England, he was never happier than in August. The suicide theory was preposterous, all agreed, and there was as little reason to believe him murdered. Nevertheless, he had walked out of March Abbey two nights ago without hat or overcoat, and had not been seen since.

The country was being patrolled night and day. A hundred keepers and workmen were beating the woods and poking the bogs on the moors, but as yet not so much as a handkerchief had been found.

Weigall did not believe for a moment that Wyatt Gifford was dead, and although it was impossible not to be affected by the general uneasiness, he was disposed to be more angry than frightened. At Cambridge Gifford had been an incorrigible practical joker, and by no means had outgrown the habit; it would be like him to cut across the country in his evening clothes, board a cattle-train, and amuse himself touching up the picture of the sensation in West Riding.

However, Weigall's affection for his friend was too deep to companion with tranquillity in the present state of doubt, and, instead of going to bed early with the other men, he determined to walk until ready for sleep. He went down to the river and followed the path through the woods. There was no moon, but the stars sprinkled their cold light upon the pretty belt of water flowing placidly past wood and ruin,

between green masses of overhanging rocks or sloping banks tangled with tree and shrub, leaping occasionally over stones with the harsh notes of an angry scold, to recover its equanimity the moment the way was clear again.

It was very dark in the depths where Weigall trod. He smiled as he recalled a remark of Gifford's: "An English wood is like a good many other things in life—very promising at a distance, but a hollow mockery when you get within. You see daylight on both sides, and the sun freckles the very bracken. Our woods need the night to make them seem what they ought to be—what they once were, before our ancestors' descendants demanded so much more money, in these so much more various days."

Weigall strolled along, smoking, and thinking of his friend, his pranks—many of which had done more credit to his imagination than this—and recalling conversations that had lasted the night through. Just before the end of the London season they had walked the streets one hot night after a party, discussing the various theories of the soul's destiny. That afternoon they had met at the coffin of a college friend whose mind had been a blank for the past three years. Some months previously they had called at the asylum to see him. His expression had been senile, his face imprinted with the record of debauchery. In death the face was placid, intelligent, without ignoble lineation—the face of the man they had known at college. Weigall and Gifford had had no time to comment there, and the afternoon and evening were full; but, coming forth from the house of festivity together, they had reverted almost at once to the topic.

"I cherish the theory," Gifford had said, "that the soul sometimes lingers in the body after death. During madness, of course, it is an impotent prisoner, albeit a conscious one. Fancy its agony, and its horror! What more natural than

that, when the life-spark goes out, the tortured soul should take possession of the vacant skull and triumph once more for a few hours while old friends look their last? It has had time to repent while compelled to crouch and behold the result of its work, and it has shrived itself into a state of comparative purity. If I had my way, I should stay inside my bones until the coffin had gone into its niche, that I might obviate for my poor old comrade the tragic impersonality of death. And I should like to see justice done to it, as it were—to see it lowered among its ancestors with the ceremony and solemnity that are its due. I am afraid that if I dissevered myself too quickly, I should yield to curiosity and hasten to investigate the mysteries of space.”

“You believe in the soul as an independent entity, then—that it and the vital principle are not one and the same?”

“Absolutely. The body and soul are twins, life comrades—sometimes friends, sometimes enemies, but always loyal in the last instance. Some day, when I am tired of the world, I shall go to India and become a mahatma, solely for the pleasure of receiving proof during life of this independent relationship.”

“Suppose you were not sealed up properly, and returned after one of your astral flights to find your earthly part unfit for habitation? It is an experiment I don’t think I should care to try, unless even juggling with soul and flesh had palled.”

“That would not be an uninteresting predicament. I should rather enjoy experimenting with broken machinery.”

The high wild roar of water smote suddenly upon Weigall’s ear and checked his memories. He left the wood and walked out on the huge slippery stones which nearly close the River Wharfe at this point, and watched the waters boil down into the narrow pass with their furious untiring

energy. The black quiet of the woods rose high on either side. The stars seemed colder and whiter just above. On either hand the perspective of the river might have run into a rayless cavern. There was no lonelier spot in England, nor one which had the right to claim so many ghosts, if ghosts there were.

Weigall was not a coward, but he recalled uncomfortably the tales of those that had been done to death in the Strid.¹ Wordsworth's Boy of Egremont had been disposed of by the practical Whitaker; but countless others, more venturesome than wise, had gone down into that narrow boiling course, never to appear in the still pool a few yards beyond. Below the great rocks which form the walls of the Strid was believed to be a natural vault, on to whose shelves the dead were drawn. The spot had an ugly fascination. Weigall stood, visioning skeletons, uncoffined and green, the home of the eyeless things which had devoured all that had covered and filled that rattling symbol of man's mortality; then fell to wondering if any one had attempted to leap the Strid of late. It was covered with slime; he had never seen it look so treacherous.

He shuddered and turned away, impelled, despite his manhood, to flee the spot. As he did so, something tossing in the foam below the fall—something as white, yet independent of it—caught his eye and arrested his step. Then he saw that it was describing a contrary motion to the rushing water—an upward backward motion. Weigall stood rigid, breathless; he fancied he heard the crackling of his hair. Was that a hand? It thrust itself still higher above the boiling foam,

¹ "This striding place is called the 'Strid,'
A name which it took of yore;
A thousand years hath it borne the name,
And it shall a thousand more."

turned sidewise, and four frantic fingers were distinctly visible against the black rock beyond.

Weigall's superstitious terror left him. A man was there, struggling to free himself from the suction beneath the Strid, swept down, doubtless, but a moment before his arrival, perhaps as he stood with his back to the current.

He stepped as close to the edge as he dared. The hand doubled as if in imprecation, shaking savagely in the face of that force which leaves its creatures to immutable law; then spread wide again, clutching, expanding, crying for help as audibly as the human voice.

Weigall dashed to the nearest tree, dragged and twisted off a branch with his strong arms, and returned as swiftly to the Strid. The hand was in the same place, still gesticulating as wildly; the body was undoubtedly caught in the rocks below, perhaps already half-way along one of those hideous shelves. Weigall let himself down upon a lower rock, braced his shoulder against the mass beside him, then, leaning out over the water, thrust the branch into the hand. The fingers clutched it convulsively. Weigall tugged powerfully, his own feet dragged perilously near the edge. For a moment he produced no impression, then an arm shot above the waters.

The blood sprang to Weigall's head; he was choked with the impression that the Strid had him in her roaring hold, and he saw nothing. Then the mist cleared. The hand and arm were nearer, although the rest of the body was still concealed by the foam. Weigall peered out with distended eyes. The meager light revealed in the cuffs links of a peculiar device. The fingers clutching the branch were as familiar.

Weigall forgot the slippery stones, the terrible death if he stepped too far. He pulled with passionate will and

muscle. Memories flung themselves into the hot light of his brain, trooping rapidly upon each other's heels, as in the thought of the drowning. Most of the pleasures of his life, good and bad, were identified in some way with this friend. Scenes of college days, of travel, where they had deliberately sought adventure and stood between one another and death upon more occasions than one, of hours of delightful companionship among the treasures of art, and others in the pursuit of pleasure, flashed like the changing particles of a kaleidoscope. Weigall had loved several women; but he would have flouted in these moments the thought that he had ever loved any woman as he loved Wyatt Gifford. There were so many charming women in the world, and in the thirty-two years of his life he had never known another man to whom he had cared to give his intimate friendship.

He threw himself on his face. His wrists were cracking, the skin was torn from his hands. The fingers still gripped the stick. There was life in them yet.

Suddenly something gave way. The hand swung about, tearing the branch from Weigall's grasp. The body had been liberated and flung outward, though still submerged by the foam and spray.

Weigall scrambled to his feet and sprang along the rocks, knowing that the danger from suction was over and that Gifford must be carried straight to the quiet pool. Gifford was a fish in the water and could live under it longer than most men. If he survived this, it would not be the first time that his pluck and science had saved him from drowning.

Weigall reached the pool. A man in his evening clothes floated on it, his face turned towards a projecting rock over which his arm had fallen, upholding the body. The hand that had held the branch hung limply over the rock, its white reflection visible in the black water. Weigall plunged

into the shallow pool, lifted Gifford in his arms and returned to the bank. He laid the body down and threw off his coat that he might be the freer to practise the methods of resuscitation. He was glad of the moment's respite. The valiant life in the man might have been exhausted in that last struggle. He had not dared to look at his face, to put his ear to the heart. The hesitation lasted but a moment. There was no time to lose.

He turned to his prostrate friend. As he did so, something strange and disagreeable smote his senses. For a half-moment he did not appreciate its nature. Then his teeth clacked together, his feet, his outstretched arms pointed towards the woods. But he sprang to the side of the man and bent down and peered into his face. There was no face.

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